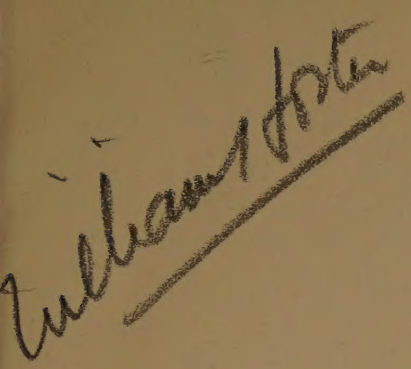

Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The Human Comedy

PROVINCIAL LIFE

VOLUME I

THE NEMOURS DILIGENCE

Savinien was the first to awaken. He then noticed Ursule with the disordered head caused by the jolting; the cap was crumpled, turned up; the unrolled plaits fell on both sides of her face, flushed with the heat of the carriage; but, in this situation, which would be dreadful for women who depend upon toilette, youth and beauty triumph.

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie Humaine* by HONORÉ DE BALZAC, now for the first time completely translated into English.

URSULE MIROUËT. IN ONE VOLUME. TRANSLATED BY MAY TOMLINSON, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH FOUR ETCHINGS.

PHILADELPHIA: PRINTED FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY BY GEORGE BARRIE & SON.

COPYRIGHTED, 1897, BY G. B. & SON

URSULE MIROUËT

TO MADEMOISELLE SOPHIE SURVILLE

It is a real pleasure, my dear niece, to dedicate to you a book, the subject and details of which have gained the hard-earned approval of a young girl who, as yet, knows nothing of the world and does not compromise with any of the lofty principles of a pious education. You young girls are a formidable public; for you ought to be allowed to read only books that are as pure as your minds, and you are forbidden certain literature as you are prevented from seeing society such as it is. May not an author therefore take pride in having pleased you? God grant that fondness has not deceived you! Who can say? That future which, I trust, you may see, and which may no longer behold

Your uncle

DE BALZAC.

PART FIRST

THE FRIGHTENED HEIRS

*

In entering Nemours, on the Paris side, one crosses the canal of the Loing, the banks of which make both rustic ramparts and picturesque walks for this pretty little town. Since 1830, several houses have, unfortunately, been built on this side of the bridge. If this species of suburb increases, the appearance of the town will lose its charming originality. But, in 1829, the sides of the way being clear, the postmaster, a big, stout man about sixty years of age, seated at the highest point of this bridge, could perfectly well, on a fine morning, embrace that which, in the terms of his profession, is called a highroad. The month of September was putting forth its treasures, the atmosphere burning above the grass and stones, no cloud disturbing the blue of the ether whose purity, everywhere intense, even on the horizon, told of the exceeding rarefaction of the air. So that Minoret-Levrault, as the postmaster was called, was obliged to make a screen

of one hand to avoid being dazzled. Like a man provoked at waiting, he looked now at the delightful fields that spread to the right of the road, and where the aftermath was growing, now at the wood-covered hill which, on the left, stretches from Nemours to Bouron. In the valley of the Loing, where echoed the noises of the road, thrown back by the hill, he could hear the gallop of his own horses and the crack of his postilions' whips. Could any but a postmaster grow impatient before a field full of Paul Potter cattle, under a Raphael sky, over a canal shaded by trees in Hobbema's style? Anyone acquainted with Nemours knows that there nature is as beautiful as art, whose mission is to spiritualize her; there, the scenery holds ideas and rouses thought. But, at sight of Minoret-Levrault, an artist would have forsaken the view to sketch this *bourgeois*, so original did his very coarseness render him. Combine all the conditions of the brute, and you get Caliban, which certainly is a great thing. Where form predominates, sentiment disappears. The postmaster, living proof of this axiom, presented one of those countenances in which a thinker can with difficulty trace the mind beneath the violent complexion produced by a rude development of the flesh. His blue cloth cap, small peaked and ribbed like a melon, outlined a head whose large dimensions proved that Gall's science has not yet attacked the subject of exceptions. The gray and almost glossy hair projecting beyond the cap would have told you that other causes than intellectual

fatigue or sorrow whiten the hair. On each side of the head, one saw large ears, almost scarred along the edges by the erosions of an over-abundant blood which seemed ready to gush out at the slightest exertion. The complexion was violet-hued under a brown coating, due to the habit of facing the sun. The eyes, gray, alert, sunken and hidden beneath two black bushes, resembled the eyes of the Kalmucks, who arrived in 1815; if at moments they sparkled, it could only be under the strain of some covetous thought. The nose, depressed at the root, suddenly turned up like the leg of a copper pot. Thick lips harmonizing with an almost repulsive double chin, the beard of which, shaved hardly twice a week, kept a wretched silk handkerchief in a threadbare condition; a neck creased with fat, though very short; and huge cheeks, completing the characteristics of stupid power that sculptors impart to their caryatids. Minoret-Levrault resembled these statues with this difference merely, that they support a building, and he had enough to do to support himself. One may meet many such an Atlas without a world. This man's head and shoulders were like a block; one might have said, those of a bull raised on his hind legs. The stalwart arms terminated in thick, hard hands, big and powerful, that could and did handle a whip, the reins, or the pitchfork, and with which no postilion ever trifled. This giant's enormous stomach was supported by thighs as thick as an adult's body, and by the feet of an elephant. Anger must have been rare with

this man, but terrible and apoplectic when he gave vent to it. Although violent and incapable of reflection, this man had done nothing to justify the sinister prophecies of his physiognomy. His postilions would say to those who quaked before the giant:

"Oh! he is not bad!"

The master of Nemours, to use an abbreviation employed in many countries, wore a bottle-green velvet shooting-jacket, green drill trousers with green stripes, an ample yellow mohair waistcoat, in the pocket of which could be seen a monstrous snuff-box outlined by a black circle. A big snuff-box for a snub nose, is a law almost without exception.

Minoret-Levrault, offspring of the Revolution and spectator of the Empire, had never mixed himself up with politics; as for his religious opinions, he had never set foot inside a church except to be married; as for his principles in private life, they existed in the Civil Code; all that was not forbidden or unattainable by the law he believed to be feasible. He had never read anything but the newspaper of the department of Seine-et-Oise, or a few instructions referring to his profession. He was considered to be a skilful farmer; but his knowledge was purely practical. Thus, with Minoret-Levrault, the mind did not belie the body. It was seldom, too, that he talked; and, before beginning to speak, he always took a pinch of snuff to give himself time to seek, not ideas, but words. As a talker, he would have struck one as a failure.

Considering that this species of trunkless and unintelligent elephant was named *Minoret-Levrault*, must one not admit with Sterne the occult power of names that sometimes mock and sometimes foretell character? In spite of his obvious incapacity, in thirty-six years he had with the help of the Revolution, acquired an income of thirty thousand francs, in fields, arable land, and forest. If Minoret, with an interest in the Nemours stage, and those running between Gâtinais and Paris, still worked, he was in this acting less through habit than for the sake of an only son for whom he wished to prepare a fine future. This son, who had become a gentleman—as the peasants termed it—had just finished reading for the bar, and when the courts re-opened, was to take the oath as lawyer's licentiate. Monsieur and Madame Minoret-Levrault,—for, through this giant everyone discovered a wife without whom such a handsome fortune was impossible,—left their son free to choose a profession for himself: notary in Paris, attorney for the crown somewhere, receiver-general no matter where, exchange agent or post-master. What whim could be denied, what calling above the aspirations of the son of a man of whom it was said from Montargis to Essonne that "Father Minoret cannot count his income." This saying, four years before, had acquired further authority when, after having sold his inn, Minoret had built himself a magnificent house and stables by transferring the stage from the Grand'Rue to the harbor. This new establishment had cost two hundred

thousand francs, that the gossips for thirty miles round doubled. The Nemours stage requires a large number of horses, it goes toward Paris as far as Fontainebleau and runs beyond the Montargis and Montereau roads; on both sides the stage is slow, and the sands of the Montargis road warrant that chimerical third horse which is always paid for and never seen. So a man built like Minoret, as rich as Minoret, and at the head of such an establishment could call himself without antiphrasis, the master of Nemours. Although he had never given a thought to God or the devil, and was as practical a materialist as he was a practical farmer, practical egotist, and practical miser, Minoret had, up till then, enjoyed unmixed happiness, if one may consider a purely material life as happiness. A physiologist, beholding the cushion of bare flesh enveloping the last vertebra and compressing this man's hind brain, and, above all, hearing the clear, shrill voice which contrasted so ludicrously with his chest and shoulders, would have perfectly understood why this big, stout, thickset farmer adored his only son, and why, perhaps, he had waited so long for him, as the child's name of Désiré sufficiently explained. In short, if love, by betraying a rich organization, is, in man, a promise of the grandest things, then philosophers will understand the causes of Minoret's incapacity. The mother, whom the son fortunately resembled, vied with the father in spoiling him. No natural child could have resisted this idolatry. So Désiré, knowing the

extent of his power, knew how to drain his mother's money-box and take from his father's purse whilst pretending to both authors of his being that he was only applying to the one. Désiré, who, at Nemours bore a part infinitely superior to that of a royal prince in his father's capital, had wished to gratify all his caprices in Paris as he had gratified them in his own small town, and, every year, he had there spent more than twelve thousand francs. But, for this sum, he had also acquired ideas that would never have come to him in Nemours; he had sloughed off the provincial skin, he had understood the power of money and foresaw a means of preferment in the bench. During this last year, he had spent an additional ten thousand francs, by forming connections with artists, with journalists and their mistresses. A somewhat disquieting confidential letter to the postmaster, whose help his son had asked in a marriage, would, at a pinch, have explained his mounting guard; but Mother Minoret-Levrault, busy preparing a sumptuous luncheon to celebrate the triumph and the return of the licentiate in law, had sent her husband on the road, bidding him ride on if he did not see the diligence. The coach which was to bring this only son, usually arrives at Nemours about five o'clock in the morning, and nine o'clock was striking!

What could cause such delay? Had there been an upset? Was Désiré alive? Had he merely a broken leg?

Three thundering cracks of a whip explode and

rend the air like musket-shots, the red waistcoats of the postilions appear, the horses neigh! the master takes off his cap and waves it, he is seen. The best mounted postilion, the one who was bringing back two dapple-gray road horses, sets spurs to his near-horse, outstrips five great coach horses, the Minorets of the stable, three carriage horses, and arrives in front of the master.

"Have you seen *la Ducler?*"

On the highroads, coaches are given rather fanciful names; they say *la Caillard*, *la Ducler*—the coach from Nemours to Paris—*le Grand-Bureau.* Every fresh undertaking is called *la Concurrence.* At the time of the Lecomtes' enterprise, their carriages were called *la Comtesse.* "*Caillard* has not overtaken *la Comtesse,* but the *Grand-Bureau* has fairly taken the shine out of her all the same! *La Caillard* and the *Grand-Bureau* have sunk *les Françaises*—the French stage coaches." If you see the postilion going at a breakneck speed and refusing a glass of wine, question the guard; he will answer, sniffing the wind and looking into space: "*La Concurrence* is ahead!"—"And we do not see it!" says the postilion.—"The villain, he can't have allowed the passengers to eat!" "Has he any?" replies the guard. "Then whip up Polignac!" All bad horses are called Polignac. Such are the jokes and the stock of conversation between the postilions and guards on top of the coaches. Every profession has its slang in France.

"Did you look inside *la Ducler?*"

"Monsieur Désiré?" replied the postilion, interrupting his master. "Eh! you must have heard us, our whips must have told you enough, we quite thought you were on the road."

"Then why is the coach four hours late?"

"The tire of one of the back wheels fell off between Essonne and Ponthierry. But there was no accident; at the hill, Cabirolle happily noticed the matter."

At this moment, a woman dressed in her Sunday clothes, for the pealing of the Nemours bell was summoning the inhabitants to the Sunday mass—a woman about thirty-six years old approached the postmaster.

"Well, cousin," she said, "you never would believe me! Our uncle is in the Grand'Rue with Ursule and they are going to High Mass."

In spite of the rules of modern poetry about local color, it is impossible to carry truth so far as to repeat the frightful abuse mingled with oaths that this news, apparently so little dramatic, called forth from Minoret-Levrault's great mouth; his shrill voice hissed and his face presented the effect so ingeniously termed by the people, *a Sunstroke.*

"Are you sure?" he said after the first explosion of anger.

The postilions passed with their horses, saluting their master, who seemed neither to see nor to hear them. Instead of waiting for his son, Minoret-Levrault turned back up the Grand'Rue with his cousin.

"Have I not always told you so?" she resumed, "when Doctor Minoret has lost his mind, this demure little chit will make him take to religion; and as whoever holds the mind holds the purse-strings, she will have our inheritance."

"But, Madame Massin—!" said the postmaster, stupefied.

"Ah! you too," replied Madame Massin, interrupting her cousin, "you are going to tell me like Massin: 'Can a little girl of fifteen invent such plans and execute them? shake the opinions of a man of eighty-three years of age, who has never set foot in a church but to be married, who holds the priests in such horror that he did not even accompany this child to the parish church the day of her first Communion?' Well then, why, if Doctor Minoret detests the priests, has he for fifteen years spent nearly every evening in the week with the Abbé Chaperon? The old hypocrite has never failed to give Ursule twenty francs for candles when she gives back the consecrated bread. Then you have forgotten the gift Ursule gave the church as thanks to the curé for having prepared her for her first Communion? She spent all her money on it, and her godfather gave it back to her, but doubled. You men notice nothing! When I heard these particulars, I said, 'Good-bye our hopes! all is over!' An uncle with an inheritance does not act like this purposelessly, toward a little sniveller picked out of the street."

"Bah! cousin," replied the postmaster, "perhaps

the old man is taking Ursule accidentally to church. It is fine, and our uncle is going for a walk."

"Cousin, our uncle holds a prayer-book; and he has a hypocritical look! In short, you will see him."

"They were hiding their game very well," answered the big postmaster, "for La Bougival told me that there was never any question of religion between the doctor and the Abbé Chaperon. Besides, the curé of Nemours is the most honest man in the world, he would give his last shirt to a beggar; he is incapable of a mean action; and dissipating an inheritance is—"

"But it is robbery," said Madame Massin.

"It's worse!" cried Minoret-Levrault, exasperated by his garrulous cousin's remark.

"I know," replied Madame Massin, "that the Abbé Chaperon, although a priest, is an honest man; but he is capable of anything for the poor! He will have bored, and bored, and bored beneath my uncle, and the doctor will have sunk into bigotry. We were quite easy, and here he is perverted. A man who has never believed in anything and who had principles! Oh! we are all done for. My husband is all upset about it."

Madame Massin, whose words were like so many arrows stinging her big cousin, made him walk along, in spite of his embonpoint, as rapidly as herself to the great astonishment of the people who were going to mass. She wanted to overtake this uncle Minoret and point him out to the postmaster.

On the Gâtinais side, Nemours is overlooked by a hill, along which extends the road of Montargis and the Loing. The church, over whose stones time has spread its rich black cloak—for it was undoubtedly rebuilt in the fourteenth century by the Guises for whom Nemours was erected into a duchy-peerage, stands up at the end of the little town, enframed at the base of a great arch. For public buildings as for men, position is everything. Shaded by several trees, and thrown up by a neat square, this solitary church produced an imposing effect. In emerging on the square, the master of Nemours could see his uncle giving his arm to the young girl called Ursule, each holding a prayer-book and going into the church. The old man removed his hat in the porch, and his head, entirely white, like a snow-capped pinnacle, shone in the soft shadows of the façade.

"Well, Minoret, what do you say to your uncle's conversion?" cried the tax-collector of Nemours, named Crémière.

"What would you have me say?" replied the postmaster, offering him a pinch of snuff.

"Well answered, père Levrault! you cannot say what you think, if a famous author was right in writing that man is obliged to think his words before speaking his thought," maliciously cried a young man who had come up, and who, in Nemours, played the rôle of Mephistopheles in Faust.

This horrid fellow, called Goupil, was the head clerk of Monsieur Crémière-Dionis, the notary of

Nemours. In spite of past behavior of an almost debauched lowness, Dionis had taken Goupil into his office, when further sojourn in Paris, where the clerk had dissipated the inheritance of his father, a well-to-do farmer who had destined him for a notary, was forbidden him by absolute poverty. Upon seeing Goupil, you would at once have understood that he had lost no time in enjoying life; for, to obtain enjoyment, he must have paid dearly. In spite of his small stature, at twenty-seven years old the clerk's chest and shoulders were as developed as those of a man of forty. Slender, short legs, a large face the color of a sky before a storm and crowned by a bald forehead, still further brought out this strange conformation. His face also seemed to belong to a humpback whose hump must have been inside. One peculiarity of this sharp, pale face confirmed the existence of this invisible hunchback. Curved and twisted like that of so many hunchbacks, the nose bent from right to left instead of accurately dividing the face. The mouth, contracted at both corners like those of the Sardinians, was always on the lookout for irony. Thin reddish hair fell in straight locks, and in places disclosed the skull. The hands, coarse and badly set at the end of over-long arms, were crooked and rarely clean. Goupil was wearing shoes only fit to throw into a rubbish heap, and thread stockings of a reddish black; his trousers and black coat, worn threadbare and almost thick with dirt; his pitiful waistcoats, several buttons of which were short of

covering; the old silk handkerchief which did duty for a tie, his whole dress told of the cynical wretchedness to which his passions condemned him.

Two eyes like goats', with the eyeballs encircled with yellow, both lascivious and cowardly, rose about this *ensemble* of forbidding things. Nobody was more feared or respected in Nemours than Goupil. Armed with pretensions allowed by his ugliness, he had that detestable intelligence peculiar to those who give themselves free license, and he used it to avenge the disappointments of a ceaseless jealousy. He rhymed satirical couplets that are sung at carnivals, he organized mock serenades, he alone wrote the little newspaper of the town. Dionis, a cunning, insincere man, but timid for all that, kept Goupil as much from fear as on account of his exceeding intelligence and his sound knowledge of the concerns of the country. But the master so much distrusted the clerk, that he kept the accounts himself, did not lodge him in his own house, kept him at a distance, and never entrusted him with any secret or delicate affair. Therefore the clerk flattered his employer by hiding the resentment that this behavior caused him, and he watched Madame Dionis with an idea of vengeance. Being gifted with keen apprehension, work was no labor to him.

"Oh! you, you are already mocking our misfortune," replied the postmaster to the clerk, who was rubbing his hands.

As Goupil meanly humored all the passions of Désiré, who for five years had made a companion of

him, the postmaster treated him rather roughly, without suspecting what terrible hoard of ill-will was accumulating at the bottom of Goupil's heart at every fresh injury. After having reckoned that money was more necessary to himself than to anyone else, the clerk, who knew himself to be superior to all the *bourgeoisie* of Nemours, wanted to make a fortune, and counted on Désiré's friendship to be able to buy one of the three offices of the town, that of clerk to the justice of the peace, one of the sheriff's offices or that occupied by Dionis. And so he patiently bore the postmaster's tirades and Madame Minoret-Levrault's contempt, and he played an infamous part with Désiré, who for two years had left him to console the Ariadnes, victims of the close of the holidays. In this way, Goupil devoured the crumbs of the feasts he had prepared.

"Had I been the old man's nephew, he would not have made God my joint-heir," replied the clerk, displaying scant, black, menacing teeth in a hideous sneer.

At this moment, Massin-Levrault junior, clerk of the justice of the peace, joined his wife, bringing with him Madame Crémière, wife of the tax-gatherer of Nemours. This person, one of the sharpest citizens in the little town, had the physiognomy of a Tartar; little round eyes like sloes, under a low forehead, woolly hair, an oily skin, big ears without edges, a mouth with hardly any lip, and a scanty beard. His manner had the merciless humility of a usurer, whose line of conduct rests upon fixed

principles. He spoke like a man who suffers from loss of voice. In short, in order to portray him, it suffices to say that he employed his eldest daughter and his wife to make copies of the trials.

Madame Crémière was a stout woman with doubtful yellow hair, a complexion covered with freckles, a little too tightly squeezed into her dresses, was connected with Madame Dionis, and passed as well-informed because she read novels. This financier of the lowest order, full of pretensions to wit and beauty, was waiting for her uncle's inheritance to *take up a certain style*, to decorate her salon and there receive the *bourgeoisie;* for her husband refused to give her the Carcel lamps, the lithographs and the useless knickknacks she saw at the house of the notary's wife. She had an excessive dread of Goupil, who used to watch for and hawk about her *capsulinguettes*—her rendering of the word *lapsus linguæ*.—One day, Madame Dionis was saying she did not know what water to use for her teeth.

"Take an opiate," she replied.

Nearly all the collateral heirs of old Doctor Minoret now found themselves assembled in the square, and the importance of the event which was stirring them up was so generally felt, that the groups of peasants, armed with their red umbrellas, all clothed in the dazzling colors which make them so picturesque on fête days on the roads, had their eyes upon the Minoret heirs. In the little towns which are something between the big boroughs and the cities, those who do not go to mass remain in the square.

They talk business. At Nemours, the hour for divine service was also that of a weekly exchange, often attended by the masters of dwellings scattered within a circuit of half a mile. This explains the understanding between the peasants against the *bourgeois* in relation to the prices of provisions and of manual labor.

"And what would you have done?" said the master of Nemours to Goupil.

"I should have made myself as necessary to his life as the air he breathes. But, in the first place, you have not known how to take him! An inheritance requires as much care as a beautiful woman, and, for want of attention, they both escape. If my mistress were here," he resumed, "she would tell you how true the simile is."

"But Monsieur Bongrand has just told me not to make ourselves uneasy," replied the justice's clerk.

"Oh! there are many ways of saying that," answered Goupil, laughing. "I should like to have heard your sly justice of the peace! If there was nothing more to be done; if, like him who lives with your uncle, I knew all was lost, I should tell you 'not to worry about anything!'

Whilst pronouncing these last words, Goupil wore so comical a smile and gave it so clear a meaning, that the heirs suspected the clerk of having been taken in by the cunning of the justice of the peace. The tax-collector, a fat little man, as insignificant as a tax-collector ought to be, and as unimportant

as a sensible woman could wish, crushed his co-heir Massin by: "I told you so!"

As double-dealing people always ascribe their own duplicity to others, Massin scowled at the justice of the peace, who was talking just then close to the church with the Marquis du Rouvre, one of his former clients.

"If I were only sure of it!" he said.

"You would paralyze the protection he grants to the Marquis du Rouvre, who has been arrested, and whom he is at this moment soaking with advice," said Goupil, insinuating an idea of revenge into the clerk, "but go gently with your chief; the old man is artful, he must have some influence over your uncle, and may still prevent him from leaving all to the Church."

"Bah! we shan't die of it," said Minoret-Levrault, opening his enormous snuff-box.

"You will not live by it either," replied Goupil, causing shivers to the two women, who were quicker than their husbands to construe into privation the loss of this inheritance so often laid out in comforts. "But we will drown this little trouble in floods of champagne in celebrating Désiré's return, eh, *gros père?*" he added, tapping the giant's stomach and thus inviting himself for fear of being forgotten.

Before proceeding any further, perhaps exact people will like to find here beforehand some kind of a titular inventory, rather necessary moreover, to learn the degrees of relationship which bound

the old man, so suddenly converted, to these three fathers of families and their wives. These crossings of race in the depths of the provinces may give grounds for more than ordinary instructive reflection.

*

At Nemours, there are only three or four households of unknown gentry, prominent amongst these being that of the Portenduère. These exclusive families frequent only the nobles who own the land or the châteaux in the neighborhood, amongst whom may be singled out the d'Aiglemonts, owners of the fine estate of Saint-Lange, and the Marquis du Rouvre, for whose property, overwhelmed with mortgages, the bourgeois were on the lookout. The nobles of the town were poor. For all estate, Madame de Portenduère possessed a farm yielding four thousand seven hundred francs income, and her town house. Against this little Faubourg Saint-Germain were grouped half a score of rich men, former millers, retired merchants, in a word, a miniature *bourgeoisie* under whom revolved small retail dealers, working men and peasants. This bourgeoisie, like that of the Swiss cantons and several other small countries, presents the curious spectacle of the irradiation of a few aboriginal families, probably Gallic, reigning over one territory, overrunning it and making the inhabitants all cousins. Under Louis XI., epoch in which the third Estate ended by turning its nicknames into real names, several of which became mingled with those of feudalism, the *bourgeoisie* of Nemours consisted of Minoret, de Massin, de Levrault and de Crémière. Under Louis XIII., these

four families already produced the Massin-Crémière, the Levrault-Massin, the Massin-Minoret, the Minoret-Minoret, the Crémière-Levrault, the Levrault-Minoret-Massin, the Massin-Levrault, the Minoret-Massin, the Massin-Massin, the Crémière-Massin, all this varied with junior, senior, Crémière-François, Levrault-Jacques, Jean-Minoret, enough to distract the father Anselm of the people, if the people had ever wanted a genealogist. The variations in the four elements of this domestic kaleidoscope became so complicated by births and marriages, that the genealogical tree of the citizens of Nemours would have puzzled even the benedictines of the Gotha almanac, in spite of the atomical science with which they arrange the zigzags of the German alliances. For a long time, the Minorets occupied the tanneries, the Crémières held the mills, the Massins applied themselves to trade, and the Levraults remained farmers. Happily for the country, these four stems spread instead of pivoting, or had thrust out fresh shoots by exiling children who sought their fortunes abroad; there are Minoret cutlers in Melun, some Levraults in Montargis, Massins in Orléans and Crémières of importance in Paris. The destinies of these bees from the mother hive are very varied. Rich Massins necessarily employ Massin workmen, in the same way as there are German princes in the service of Austria or Prussia. The same province sees a Minoret millionaire guarded by a Minoret soldier. Filled with the same blood and called by the same name to all similarity,

these four shuttles had unceasingly woven a human canvas, every shred of which happened to be gown or towel, superb cambric or coarse lining. The same blood ran in the head, in the feet or the heart, in the industrious hands, in diseased lungs or in a brow, big with genius. The heads of the clan dwelt faithfully in the little town, where the ties of kindred slackened or contracted at the will of events enacted by this strange *cognomenism*. In whatever country you go, change the names and you will recognize the fact, but without the poetry that feudalism imparted to it and that Walter Scott has reproduced with so much talent. Let us look higher and examine human nature in history. All the noble families of the eleventh century, now almost all extinct, except the royal race of the Capets, have necessarily all co-operated in the birth of a Rohan, a Montmorency, a Bauffremont, and a Mortemart of to-day; in fact they must all necessarily be in the blood of the last gentleman who is truly a gentleman. In other words, every *bourgeois* is cousin to a *bourgeois*, and every nobleman, cousin to a nobleman. As it says in the sublime pages of the biblical genealogies, in a thousand years, three families, Shem, Ham and Japheth, can cover the globe with their children. A family can become a nation, and, unfortunately, a nation can once more become a single, simple family. To prove this, it suffices to apply to the investigation of ancestors and their accumulation that time increases in a retrograde geometrical progression multiplied by itself, the

calculation of that sage, who, when asking a Persian king, as a reward for having invented the game of chess, to give him one ear of corn for the first square of the chess-board whilst always doubling it, demonstrated that the kingdom itself would not suffice to pay it. The network of nobility encircled by the network of the *bourgeoisie*, this antagonism of two races, the one protected by immovable institutions, the other by the active patience of work and the wiles of trade, produced the revolution of 1789. The two races, almost reunited, stand to-day face to face with collateral heirs without any inheritance. What are they going to do? Our political future is pregnant with the reply.

The family of him who under Louis XV. called himself simply Minoret, was so numerous, that one of the five children, the Minoret whose entrance into the church created a sensation, went to seek his fortune in Paris, and only appeared at long intervals in his native town, where, upon the death of his grandparents, he doubtless came to fetch his share of the inheritance. After having suffered a great deal, like all young people gifted with a strong will and who wish to hold a place in the brilliant society of Paris, the child of the Minorets created for himself a finer destiny than he had perhaps ever dreamt of at the outset; for he had at once devoted himself to medicine, one of the professions which require talent and luck, but even more luck than talent. Supported by Dupont—of Nemours,—connected by a lucky chance with the Abbé Morellet that Voltaire

used to call *Mords-les*, and protected by the encyclopedists, Doctor Minoret attached himself like a satellite to the great doctor Bordeu, Diderot's friend. D'Alembert, Helvétius, Baron d'Holbach, and Grimm, before whom he was a mere lad, doubtless ended, like Bordeu, by interesting themselves in Minoret, who, about 1777, had a fairly large practice of deists, encyclopedists, sensualists, and materialists, whatever you like to call the rich philosophers of those times. Although he was in no way a quack, he invented the famous balsam of Lelièvre, so much praised by the *Mercure de France*, the advertisement of which was always at the end of this newspaper, the weekly organ of the encyclopedists. The apothecary Lelièvre, a clever man, saw a speculation in what Minoret had only looked upon as a preparation to be placed in the pharmacopœia, and loyally he had shared his profits with the doctor, who was a pupil of Rouelle's in chemistry, as he had been Bordeu's in medicine. One might have been a materialist for less. In 1778, period when *la Nouvelle Héloïse* reigned and people sometimes married for love, the doctor made a love match with the daughter of a famous harpsichord player, Valentin Mirouët, a celebrated musician, weak and delicate, who was killed by the Revolution. Minoret was intimately acquainted with Robespierre, to whom he had formerly given a gold medal for an essay upon the following subject: *What is the origin of the opinion which spreads over the whole family part of the shame attached to the ignominious*

penalties endured by a culprit? Is this opinion more harmful than effective? And, if it should be decided for the affirmative, what means should be employed to guard against the disadvantages resulting from this? The Royal Academy of Science and Art at Metz, to which Minoret belonged, must have the original of this essay. Although, thanks to this friendship, the doctor's wife had nothing to apprehend, she was so afraid of going to the scaffold, that this unconquerable terror aggravated the aneurism which she owed to an exaggerated sensitiveness. In spite of all the precautions that an adoring man could take for his wife, Ursule met the cart full of the condemned, in which was Madame Roland, and this sight caused her death. Minoret, full of tenderness for his Ursule, to whom he had refused nothing and who had led a life of studied elegance, found himself almost poor after he had lost her. Robespierre had him appointed head physician to a hospital.

Although, during the animated altercations to which mesmerism gave rise, Minoret's name acquired a celebrity which recalled him from time to time to his parents, the Revolution was so great a dissolvent and so broke up family connections that, in 1813, Nemours was entirely unaware of the existence of Doctor Minoret, who was led by an unforeseen chance to conceive the idea of returning, like a hare, to die at home.

Whilst traveling through France, where the eye so quickly wearies of the monotony of the plains, who is there that has not felt the delicious sensation

from the top of a hill, from its slope or at the turn, just when the promise is of a barren landscape, of discovering a fresh valley watered by a river, and a little town sheltered under the rock like a hive in the hollow of an old willow? At the sound of the *Hue!* of the postilion who is walking beside his horses, one shakes off sleep, one admires as a dream within a dream some beautiful landscape which is to the traveler what a remarkable passage in a book is to a reader, one of Nature's brilliant thoughts. Such is the sensation caused by the sudden view of Nemours when one arrives there from Bourgogne. From there it is seen, encircled by bare, gray, white and black rocks, weirdly shaped, like those that are so often found in the forest of Fontainebleau, and from which the scattered trees shoot up, standing clearly out against the sky and giving a wild appearance to this species of crumbled wall. There the long forest hill ends which slopes from Nemours to Bouron while skirting the road. At the bottom of this crude amphitheatre stretches a field where the Loing flows, forming sheeted waterfalls. This delicious landscape, which follows the Montargis road, resembles an opera scene, so studied are the effects. One morning, the doctor, whom a rich invalid in Bourgogne had summoned, and who was returning post haste to Paris, not having said at the preceding stage which road he wished to take, was driven unconsciously through Nemours and, between two naps, once more beheld the country in the midst of which his childhood had been passed.

The doctor had then lost several of his old friends. The sectary of the Encyclopedia had witnessed the conversion of La Harpe, he had buried Lebrun-Pindare, and Marie-Joseph de Chénier, and Morellet, and Madame Helvétius. He assisted at the semi-downfall of Voltaire, attacked by Geoffroy, the continuer of Fréron. He was then thinking of retiring. And so, when his post chaise stopped at the top of the Grand'Rue of Nemours, he was prompted to inquire for his family. Minoret-Levrault came himself to see the doctor, who recognized his eldest brother's son in the postmaster. This nephew presented his wife as the only daughter of father Levrault-Crémière, who, twelve years ago, had left him the post-house and the finest inn in Nemours.

"Well, nephew," said the doctor, "have I any other heirs?"

"My aunt Minoret, your sister, married a Massin-Massin."

"Yes, the surveyor of Saint-Lange."

"She died a widow, leaving one daughter, who has just married a Crémière, a charming fellow, who has no employment as yet."

"Well! she is my direct niece. Now, as my sailor brother died a bachelor, as Captain Minoret was killed at Monte-Legino, and as I am here, the paternal line is exhausted. Have I any relations on the maternal side? My mother was a Jean Massin-Levrault."

"Of the Jean Massin-Levraults," replied Minoret-Levrault, "there only remains one Jean Massin, who

married Monsieur Crémière-Levrault-Dionis, a fodder contractor, who perished on the scaffold. His wife died of despair and ruined, leaving a daughter married to a Levrault-Minoret, a farmer at Montereau, who does very well; and their daughter has just married a Massin-Levrault,—notary's clerk at Montargis, where the father is a locksmith."

"So I am not lacking in heirs," said the doctor gaily, who desired to take a stroll round Nemours in company with his nephew.

The Loing undulates through the town, bordered by terraced gardens and tidy houses whose aspect gives rise to the belief that prosperity must dwell there rather than elsewhere. When the doctor turned out of the Grand'Rue into the Rue des Bourgeois, Minoret-Levrault pointed out the property of Monsieur Levrault, a rich ironmonger in Paris, who, he said, had just let himself die.

"There, uncle, is a pretty house for sale, it has a delightful garden looking on the river."

"Let us go in," said the doctor, spying at the bottom of a little paved court, a house squeezed between the walls of two neighboring houses hidden by massive trees and climbing plants.

"It is built over cellars," said the doctor, going in by a very steep flight of steps decorated with vases of white and blue faïence where geraniums were then in bloom.

Cut up, like most provincial houses, by a corridor leading from the court to the garden, there was nothing to the right but a drawing-room lighted by four

windows, two facing the court and two overlooking the garden; but Levrault-Levrault had sacrificed one of these windows as an entrance to a long brick greenhouse which reached from the drawing-room to the river, where it ended in a horrible Chinese pavilion.

"Good! by roofing this greenhouse and flooring it," said old Minoret, "I could stow away my library and make a fine study of this extraordinary piece of architecture."

On the opposite side of the corridor, overlooking the garden, was a dining-room, in imitation black lacquer with green and gold flowers, and separated from the kitchen by the frame of the staircase. A little office contrived behind this staircase, communicated with the kitchen, the iron-grated windows of which opened upon the courtyard. There were two rooms on the first floor; and above, roofed attics which were still inhabitable. After a rapid examination of this house covered from top to bottom with green trellis work, on the side of the courtyard as well as the garden side, and which terminated on the river in a terrace filled with faïence vases, the doctor said:

"Levrault-Levrault must have spent a lot of money here!"

"Oh! sums as big as himself," replied Minoret-Levrault. "He loved flowers, such nonsense! 'What do they bring in?' says my wife. You see, an artist came from Paris to paint his corridor with flowers in fresco. He put plate glass everywhere.

The ceilings were done up with cornices that cost six francs a foot. The dining-room floor is all inlaid, such follies! The house is not worth a penny the more."

"Well, nephew, make this purchase for me, and let me know about it, here is my address; the rest my solicitor will see to.—Who lives opposite?" he asked, on leaving.

"Some refugees!" replied the postmaster, "a Chevalier de Portenduère."

Once the house was bought, the famous doctor, instead of going there, wrote to his nephew to let it. The Folie-Levrault was inhabited by the notary of Nemours, who then sold his practice to Dionis, his head clerk, and who died two years after, saddling the doctor with a house to let just when Napoléon's fate was being decided in the vicinity. The doctor's heirs, pretty well deceived, had taken his desire to return as a rich man's caprice, and were frantic at supposing him to have ties in Paris which would keep him there and rob them of their inheritance. Nevertheless, Minoret-Levrault's wife seized this opportunity of writing to the doctor. The old man replied that as soon as peace was signed, once the roads were free of soldiers and communication re-established, he should come to live at Nemours. He paid a flying visit with two of his patients, a hospital architect and an upholsterer, who undertook repairs, interior arrangements and the transport of the furniture. Madame Minoret-Levrault offered, as caretaker, the cook of the

deceased old notary, who was accepted. When the heirs knew that their uncle or great-uncle Minoret was positively going to live at Nemours, their families were seized, in spite of the political events which at that time weighed upon Le Gâtinais and La Brie, with a devouring but almost legitimate curiosity. Was their uncle rich? Was he economical or extravagant? Would he leave a handsome fortune, or none at all? Had he any life annuities? This is what they finally learnt, but with infinite difficulty and by means of underhand espionage. After the death of Ursule Minoret, his wife, from 1789 to 1813, the doctor, appointed consulting physician to the Emperor in 1805, must have earned a great deal of money, but nobody knew his income; he lived simply, with no other expenses than those of a carriage by the year, and a sumptuous apartment; he never received company and nearly always dined out. His housekeeper, furious at not accompanying him to Nemours, told Zélie Levrault, the postmaster's wife, that she knew the doctor to have fourteen thousand francs income from the Funds. Now, after twenty years' practice in a profession which the titles of head physician of a hospital, physician to the Emperor, and member of the Institute rendered so lucrative, these fourteen thousand francs income, profit of successive investments, implied at the most one hundred and sixty thousand francs savings! To have saved only eight thousand francs a year, the doctor must have had a great many vices or a great many virtues to gratify;

but neither the housekeeper, nor Zélie, nor anybody could fathom the reason for this moderate expenditure; Minoret, who was much regretted in his neighborhood, was one of the most benevolent men in Paris, and, like Larrey, kept his charitable acts a profound secret. It was therefore with keen satisfaction that the heirs saw the arrival of the rich upholstery and the large library of their uncle, already an officer of the Legion of Honor, and appointed by the King chevalier of the order of Saint-Michel, perhaps on account of his retirement which made way for some favorite. But, when the architect, the painters, and the upholsterers had arranged all in the most comfortable manner, the doctor did not come. Madame Minoret-Levrault, who was superintending the upholsterer and the architect as if it were a question of her own fortune, learnt, through the indiscretion of a young man sent down to arrange the library, that the doctor took care of an orphan called Ursule. This news made wild havoc in the town of Nemours. The old man at last came home toward the middle of the month of January, 1815, and secretly installed himself with a little girl of ten months, accompanied by a wet-nurse.

"Ursule cannot be his daughter, he is seventy-one years old!" said the alarmed heirs.

"Whatever she may be," said Madame Massin, "she will give us plenty of worry!"

The doctor gave a somewhat cold reception to his great-niece on the maternal side, whose husband had just bought the clerkship of the justice of the peace,

and who had been the first to venture to tell him of their hard situation. Massin and his wife were not rich. Massin's father, a locksmith at Montargis, obliged to compound with his creditors, at sixty-seven years of age was working like a young man, and would leave nothing. Madame Massin's father, Levrault-Minoret, had just died at Montereau, from the effects of war, having seen his farm burnt, his fields ruined and his cattle consumed.

"We shall get nothing from your great-uncle," said Massin to his wife, who was already pregnant with her second child.

The doctor secretly gave them ten thousand francs, with which the clerk of the justice of the peace, a friend of the notary and sheriff of Nemours, started usury and went to work so thoroughly with the peasants of the vicinity, that just now Goupil knew him to be worth eighty thousand francs in unacknowledged capital.

As for his other niece, the doctor, through his connections in Paris, obtained the collectorship of Nemours for Crémière and guaranteed the security. Although Minoret-Levrault was in need of nothing, Zélie, jealous of the uncle's liberality to his two nieces, introduced her son to him, who was then ten years old, and whom she was going to send to a college in Paris, where, she said, education was very expensive. As he was physician at Fontanes, the doctor obtained a half-scholarship at the college of Louis-le-Grand for his great-nephew, who was placed in the fourth class.

Crémière, Massin and Minoret-Levrault, exceedingly vulgar people, were mercilessly summed up by the doctor from the first two months during which they tried to encompass, not so much the uncle, as the inheritance. People who are guided by instinct have this disadvantage compared to people of ideas, that they are at once found out; instinct's inspirations are too natural, and appeal too much to the eye not to be immediately perceived; whilst, to be fathomed, the conceptions of intellect demand an equal intelligence on both sides. After having bought the gratitude of his heirs, and having in some degree closed their mouths, the wily doctor alleged his occupations, habits, and the attentions required by the little Ursule as an excuse to avoid receiving them, without, however, forbidding them the house. He liked to dine alone, he went to bed and rose late, he had come to his native country in search of rest and solitude. These caprices of an old man appeared sufficiently natural, and his heirs contented themselves with calling upon him every Sunday between one and four o'clock, weekly visits which he tried to stop by saying to them:

"Do not come to see me unless you want me."

The doctor, without refusing to grant consultations in serious cases, especially for the poor, would not become physician to the little hospital at Nemours, and declared that he would no longer practise his profession.

"I have killed people enough," he said laughingly

to the Curé Chaperon, who, knowing him to be charitable, was pleading for the poor.

"He is notoriously eccentric!"

This remark, said about Doctor Minoret, was the harmless revenge of offended vanity, for the doctor formed for himself a society of persons who deserved to be classed opposite the heirs. Now, those of the *bourgeois* who thought themselves worthy of swelling the court of a man with a black ribbon, treasured up a ferment of jealousy against the doctor and his privileged friends, which, unfortunately, had its results.

Through some odd freak explained by the proverb: "Extremes meet," the materialist doctor and the Curé of Nemours quickly became friends. The old man was very fond of backgammon, a favorite game with churchmen, and the Abbé Chaperon and the doctor were evenly matched. So the game was the first link between them. Then Minoret was charitable, and the Curé of Nemours was the Fénelon of Gâtinais. Both were broadly educated; the man of God was the only one in all Nemours who could understand atheism. To be able to argue, two men must in the first place understand each other. What pleasure is there in addressing pungent words to some one who does not feel them? The doctor and the priest both had too much good taste, and had seen too much of good society not to practise its precepts; they could in that case, wage that mimic warfare which is so necessary to all conversation. Each disliked the other's opinions, but they respected

each other's character. If such contrasts and such sympathies are not the elements of private life, must one not despair of society, which, especially in France, requires some kind of antagonism? It is from collision of character, not from conflict of ideas, that antipathies arise. The Abbé Chaperon was then the doctor's first friend in Nemours. This ecclesiastic, then sixty years old, had been curé of Nemours since the revival of Catholic worship. Out of love for his flock, he had refused the vicariate of the diocese. If those who were indifferent to religious matters were pleased with him, the faithful loved him even more. Thus respected by his flock and valued by the population, the curé did good without inquiring into the religious opinions of unfortunate people. His vicarage had hardly furniture sufficient for his needs and was as cold and bare as a miser's house. Avarice and charity betray themselves in similar effects; does not charity lay up for itself the treasure in Heaven that the miser lays up on earth? The Abbé Chaperon disputed his expenditure with his servant with as much severity as Gobseck did with his, if however, this famous Jew ever had a servant. The good priest often sold the silver buckles from his shoes and breeches to give the value of them to the poor who caught him without a penny. When they saw him coming out of his church, with the ends of his breeches tied into the buttonholes, the devotees of the town then went to find the curé's buckles at the watchmaker and jeweler's of Nemours, and scolded their pastor when

they brought them back to him. He never bought himself linen or clothes, and wore his garments until they were unwearable. His linen, thick with darns, marked his skin like a haircloth. Madame de Portenduère or other simple souls then agreed with the housekeeper to replace his linen or old clothes by new ones during his sleep, and the curé did not always remark the change at once. At home he ate off pewter and with knives and forks of wrought iron. When he received his officiating priests and curates on days of solemnity, which is a tax upon the curés of the district, he used to borrow silver and table linen from his friend the atheist.

"My silver is his salvation!" the doctor would then say.

These good actions, which were sooner or later discovered and always accompanied by spiritual encouragement, were accomplished with sublime naïveté. This life was all the more meritorious, in that the Abbé Chaperon possessed erudition as extensive as it was varied, and rare attainments. With him, shrewdness and grace, simplicity's inseparable companions, enhanced a delivery worthy of a prelate. His manners, his character and his habits imparted that exquisite savor to his conversation, which, with intelligence, is both witty and sincere. Disposed to humor, he never acted the priest in a drawing-room. Until Doctor Minoret's arrival, the simple soul left his light under a bushel without any regret; but maybe he was very

pleased to turn them to account. Though when he came to Nemours he was rich in the possession of a fairly fine library and an income of two thousand francs, in 1829 the curé owned nothing more than the revenue from his cure, almost entirely distributed every year. An excellent counselor in delicate affairs or in troubles, many a person, who never went to church for consolation used to go to the presbytery to seek advice. One small anecdote will suffice to complete this moral picture. Some of the peasants, rarely, it is true, and after all dishonest people, said they were being sued, in order to rouse the benevolence of the Abbé Chaperon. They deceived their wives, who, seeing their home threatened with dispossession and their cows seized, deceived the poor curé with their innocent tears, so that he could then find them the necessary seven or eight hundred francs, with which the peasant would buy a plot of ground. When religious persons, churchwardens, explained the fraud to the Abbé Chaperon whilst begging him to consult them to avoid being made the victim of cupidity, he said:

"Perhaps these people would have committed some crime to get their acre of earth, is it not at least doing good to prevent evil?"

Readers may be pleased to here find the sketch of this figure, remarkable in that science and literature had passed through this heart and vigorous mind while leaving them uncorrupted.

At sixty, the Abbé Chaperon had entirely white hair, so keenly did he feel the misfortune of others,

so much also had the incidents of the Revolution told upon him. Twice he had been imprisoned for twice refusing to take an oath, and twice, as he expressed it, had he said his *In Manus*. He was middle-sized, neither fat nor thin. His face, deeply wrinkled, hollow and colorless, at once attracted attention by the profound tranquillity of the lines and the purity of the contour, which appeared to be bordered with light. The face of a chaste man with an indescribable radiance. Brown eyes with glowing pupils, animated this irregular face which was surmounted by an immense forehead. His glance exercised inexplicable influence by a gentleness which did not exclude strength. The arches over his eyes were like two vaults shaded by great grizzly eyebrows which were not at all alarming. As he had lost many of his teeth, his mouth was out of shape and his cheeks fallen in; but these ravages were not without charm, and the friendly wrinkles seemed to smile upon one. Without being the least gouty, he had such sensitive feet and walked with so much difficulty that he wore Orleans calfskin shoes in all weathers. He considered the fashion of wearing trousers ill suited to a priest and always appeared clothed in coarse black woolen stockings knitted by his housekeeper, and cloth breeches. He never went out in a cassock, but in a brown frock coat, and he adhered to the three-cornered hat, bravely worn through the worst times. This noble, handsome old man, whose face was always beautiful by the serenity of a blameless

soul, was to have so great an influence over the events and the men in this history that it is necessary first to trace the source of his authority.

Minoret took in three newspapers; one liberal, one ministerial, one ultra, several periodicals and some scientific journals, collections of which swelled his library. The newspapers, the encyclopedist and the books were an attraction to a former captain of the Royal-Swedish regiment, named Monsieur de Jordy, a Voltairean gentleman and an old bachelor who lived upon a pension of sixteen hundred francs and a life annuity. After having, through the medium of the curé, read the gazettes for several days, Monsieur de Jordy thought proper to go and thank the doctor. From the first visit, the old captain, formerly a professor in the military colleges, won the good graces of the old doctor, who hastened to return his call. Monsieur de Jordy, a dry, thin little man, always troubled with full bloodedness, although he had a very pale face, struck one at first by his fine forehead à la Charles XII., above which he kept his hair cut as close as that of that soldier-king. His blue eyes, profoundly sad, that seemed to say: "Love has passed by here," interested one at first sight, and where one might catch glimpses of the memories which he otherwise guarded with such profound secrecy, that his old friends never surprised either any allusion to his past life or any one of those exclamations wrung through a similarity of calamities. He concealed the mournful mystery of his past under a philosophic

gaiety; but, when he thought himself alone, his movements, benumbed by a slowness that was less senile than calculated, attested some painful and uninterrupted thought; so the Abbé Chaperon had nicknamed him the Christian before knowing him. Always dressed in blue cloth, his rather stiff carriage and his clothes betrayed the former habits of military discipline. His gentle, harmonious voice stirred the soul. His beautiful hands, and the cut of his figure, which recalled that of the Comte d'Artois, whilst showing how charming he must have been in his youth, rendered the mystery of his life even more impenetrable. One asked one's self involuntarily what misfortune could have overtaken the beauty, courage, grace, learning and all the most valuable qualities of heart which were formerly united in his person. Monsieur de Jordy always winced at the name of Robespierre. He took a great deal of snuff, and, strange to say, he left it off on account of the little Ursule, who, because of this habit, showed repugnance for him. From the time he was allowed to see this little one, the captain riveted long, almost passionate looks upon her. So madly did he love her games, and so much did he interest himself in her, that this affection tightened still closer the links between him and the doctor, who never dared ask this old bachelor:

"And you too have lost some children?"

There are beings, good and patient like him, who pass through life with a bitter thought in the heart and a smile both tender and mournful on the lips,

bearing with them the solution to the riddle without allowing it to be fathomed, through pride, disdain or vengeance perhaps, having none but God for confidant and comforter. Monsieur de Jordy saw no one at Nemours—where, like the doctor, he had come to die in peace—but the curé, always at the disposal of his parishioners, and Madame de Portenduère, who used to go to bed at nine o'clock. And so, tired out, he ended by going to bed early, in spite of the thorns with which his pillow was stuffed. So it was a piece of good luck for the doctor as well as for the captain, to meet a man who had seen the same society, and who spoke the same language, with whom to exchange ideas, and who went to bed late. Once Monsieur de Jordy, the Abbé Chaperon and Minoret had spent the first evening together, they experienced such pleasure from it, that the priest and the soldier returned every evening at nine o'clock, when, little Ursule having gone to bed, the old man found himself at liberty. And all three stayed up until twelve or one o'clock.

*

Very soon this trio became a quartette. Another man to whom life was known, and who to the habit of business owed that forbearance, that knowledge, that mass of observation, that shrewdness, and that talent for conversation which the soldier, the doctor and the curé owed to experience of souls, sick people and a profession—the justice of the peace sniffed the pleasures of these evenings and sought the doctor's society. Before becoming justice of the peace at Nemours, Monsieur Bongrand had been solicitor for ten years at Melun, where he pleaded himself, according to the custom of towns where there is no bar. Becoming a widower at forty-five, he still felt too active to be idle; so he had applied for the justiceship of the peace of Nemours, which was vacant some months before the doctor's instalment. The Keeper of the Seals is always glad to find practitioners, and especially people who are well off, to hold this important magistracy. Monsieur Bongrand lived modestly at Nemours upon the fifteen hundred francs from his post, and was thus able to devote his income to his son, who was reading for the bar at Paris, while studying jurisprudence under the famous solicitor Derville. Father Bongrand somewhat resembled an old retired head-clerk; he had a face that was not so much pale

as turned pale, upon which business, disappointments and disgust have left their traces, wrinkled with thought and also with the continual contraction customary with people who are obliged not to repeat everything; but it was often illuminated by those smiles which are peculiar to those men who alternately believe everything or nothing, accustomed to hear and see everything without surprise, to pierce the mysteries that self-interest unfolds at the bottom of all hearts. Under his hair, less white than faded, waving back over his head, he had a shrewd forehead whose yellow color harmonized with the threads of his scanty hair. His puckered face gave him all the more resemblance to a fox as his nose was short and pointed. Out of his wide mouth, like that of great talkers, he spurted white sparks which made his conversation so showery, that Goupil wickedly said: "One wants an umbrella to listen to him," or else: "Judgments *à la justice de paix* are raining." Behind his spectacles his eyes looked sharp; but, if he took them off, his dulled glance seemed simple. Although he was gay, almost jovial even, he always gave himself by his bearing, a little too much the look of an important man. He nearly always held his hands in his breeches pockets, and only removed them to secure his spectacles with an almost mocking movement which seemed to announce a shrewd observation or some victorious argument. His gestures, loquacity and innocent affectations betrayed the former provincial solicitor; but these

slight faults only existed on the surface; he redeemed them by an acquired good nature which a strict moralist would call the indulgence natural to superiority. If he were a little fox-like, he was also considered deeply cunning, without being dishonest. His artfulness was the game of perspicacity. But are not those people called cunning who foresee a result and protect themselves from the traps that are laid for them? The justice of the peace loved whist, a game that the captain and the doctor knew, and which the curé learnt in a very short time.

This little company became an oasis in Minoret's salon. The Nemours doctor, who was not wanting in education or good breeding, and who honored Minoret as one of the celebrities in medicine, had free access; but his work and fatigue, which obliged him to retire early in order to rise early, prevented him from being as regular as were the doctor's three friends. The reunion of these five superior persons, the only ones in Nemours who had sufficient general information to understand each other, explains old Minoret's feeling of repulsion for his heirs; if he had to leave them his fortune, he could hardly admit them into his society. Whether the postmaster, the clerk and the collector understood these distinctions, or whether they were reassured by their uncle's loyalty and benefaction, to his great satisfaction they ceased visiting him. And so the four old whist and backgammon-players, seven or eight months after the doctor's installation at Nemours, formed a compact, exclusive society,

which was for each like an unexpected, autumn fraternity, the delights were only the better enjoyed. In Ursule, this family of chosen spirits had a child adopted by each according to his tastes; the curé thought about the soul, the justice of the peace constituted himself the guardian, the soldier promised himself to become the tutor; and, as for Minoret, he was at once father, mother and physician.

After having become acclimatized, the old man resumed his habits and regulated his life as it is regulated in the depths of all the provinces. On account of Ursule, he never received anyone in the morning, and he never invited anyone to dine; his friends could arrive about six in the evening and stay until midnight. The first comers used to find the papers on the salon table and would read them whilst waiting for the others, or they would sometimes go to meet the doctor if he were out walking. These quiet habits were not only necessary to old age, but with the old gentleman were wisely and deeply calculated to prevent his happiness from being disturbed by the anxious curiosity of his heirs or by the tittle-tattle of the small towns. He would make no concessions to that fickle goddess, public opinion, whose tyranny, one of France's misfortunes, was setting itself up and making a very province of our country. And so, from the time the child was weaned and could walk, he sent away the cook that his niece, Madame Minoret-Levrault, had given him, through discovering that she told the postmistress of all that went on in his house.

Little Ursule's wet-nurse, the widow of a poor workman with no other than his Christian name and who came from Bougival, had lost her last child when it was six months old, just when the doctor, touched by her distress and knowing her to be an honest good creature, took her as wet-nurse. Penniless, from La Bresse, where her family lived in want, Antoinette Patris, widow of Pierre surnamed De Bougival, attached herself naturally to Ursule as foster mothers attach themselves to their nurslings when they keep them. This blind maternal affection increased with domestic devotion. Anticipating the doctor's intentions, La Bougival secretly learned to cook, became clean and handy and fell into the old man's ways. She took particular care of the furniture and the rooms, and, in short, was indefatigable. The doctor not only wanted to keep his private life sacred, but moreover he had reasons for concealing the knowledge of his business from his heirs. So, from the second year of his establishment, he had no one in the house but La Bougival, upon whose discretion he could absolutely depend, and he disguised his real motives under the all-powerful reason of economy. To the great content of his heirs, he became stingy. Without wheedling and by the sole influence of her solicitude and devotion, La Bougival, just forty-three at the time this drama commences, was housekeeper to the doctor and his protégée, the hinge upon which all in the house turned, in short, the trusted servant. They had called her La Bougival

from the recognized impossibility of applying her Christian name of Antoinette to her person, for names and figures obey the laws of harmony.

The doctor's avarice was no mere empty word, but there was an object in it. From 1817, he cut off two newspapers and stopped subscribing to his periodicals. His yearly expenditure, that all Nemours could reckon, never exceeded eighteen hundred francs a year. Like all old men, his needs in linen, booting and clothes were almost nothing. Every six months, he made a journey to Paris, doubtless to receive and himself invest his income. During fifteen years, he did not say one word that related to his affairs. His trust in Bongrand came very late; it was only after the Revolution of 1830, that he unfolded his schemes to him. Such were the only things in the doctor's life then known to the *bourgeoisie* and his heirs. As to his political opinions, as his house tax was only one hundred francs, he mixed himself up in nothing, and scouted Royalist and Liberal subscriptions alike. His known horror for *parsons* and his deism were so averse to manifestations, that he turned out of doors a commercial traveler sent by his great-nephew Désiré Minoret-Levrault to sell him a *Curé Meslier* and the *Discours* by General Foy. Such mistaken tolerance seemed unaccountable to the Liberals of Nemours.

The doctor's three collateral heirs, Minoret-Levrault and his wife, Monsieur and Madame Massin-Levrault junior, Monsieur and Madame Crémière-Crémière—whom we will call simply Crémière,

Massin, and Minoret, since these distinctions between namesakes are only necessary in Gâtinais, —these three families, too busy to create a new centre, visited one another as they do in all small towns. The postmaster used to give a big dinner on his son's birthday, a ball at the Carnival, and another on the anniversaries of his wedding, when he invited all the *bourgeoisie* of Nemours. The tax-gatherer also summoned his relations and friends twice a year. The clerk of the justice of the peace, "too poor" he said, "to rush into such extravagances," lived in a very small way in a house in the middle of the Grand'Rue, part of which, the ground floor, was let to his sister, directress of the post-office, another of the doctor's kindnesses. However, during the year, these three heirs or their wives met in the town, out walking, in the market in the morning, on their doorsteps, or, on Sundays, after mass, in the square, as just now; so that they used to see each other every day. Now, for the last three years particularly, the doctor's age, his avarice and his fortune warranted allusions or direct remarks referring to the inheritance, which ended by spreading from place to place and making the doctor and his heirs equally far-famed. For six months past, not a week went by without the friends or neighbors of the Minoret heirs speaking to them, with secret envy, "of the day when the old man's eyes being closed, his coffers would open."

"It's no use Doctor Minoret being a doctor and settling with death, God only is eternal," said one.

"Bah! he will bury us all; he is in better health than we are," replied the heir hypocritically.

"Well, if it is not you, your children will always inherit, unless that little Ursule—"

"He will not leave all to her."

Ursule, according to Madame Massin's anticipations, was the *bête-noire* of the heirs, their sword of Damocles, and this remark, "Bah! those that live will see!" Madame Crémière's favorite conclusion, was enough to show that they wished her more harm than good.

The tax-gatherer and the clerk, both poor compared to the postmaster, had often, by way of conversation, estimated the doctor's inheritance. Whilst walking along the canal or on the road, if they saw their uncle coming, they would look at each other piteously.

"No doubt he has kept some elixir of long life for himself," one would say.

"He has made a compact with the devil," the other would reply.

"He ought to favor both of us, because that fat Minoret does not want anything."

"Ah! Minoret has a son who will squander lots of money!"

"What do you reckon the doctor's fortune to be?" the clerk asked the financier.

"At the end of twelve years, twelve thousand francs saved every year gives one hundred and forty-four thousand francs, and the compound interest produces at least one hundred thousand francs; but,

as he must have made several good speculations through the advice of his notary at Paris, and that, up to 1822, he must have invested at eight and at seven and a half in the State, the old man now turns over about four hundred thousand francs, besides his fourteen thousand francs income from the five per cents, now at one hundred and sixteen. If he were to die to-morrow without favoring Ursule, he would then leave us seven to eight hundred thousand francs, besides his house and furniture."

"Well then, one hundred thousand to Minoret, one hundred thousand to the little one, and to each of us three hundred; that would be just."

"Ah! that would fit us nicely."

"If he did that," cried Massin, "I would sell my clerkship, and I would buy a fine estate; I should try to become judge at Fontainebleau, and I should be deputy."

"As for me, I should buy a stockbroker's business," said the tax-gatherer.

"Unfortunately, this little girl he has on his arm, and the curé have hemmed him in so well, that we can do nothing with him."

"After all, we are always quite sure that he will leave nothing to the Church."

Everyone can now understand what a fright the heirs were in at seeing their uncle going to mass. Everyone is intelligent enough to imagine any injury to self-interest. Interest constitutes the peasant's mind as it does that of the diplomatist, and, on this footing, the simplest outwardly may perhaps

be the strongest. And so this terrible argument: "If little Ursule has the power to thrust her protector into the lap of the Church, she would certainly be able to make him give her the inheritance," flashed in letters of fire across the mind of the most obtuse of the heirs. The postmaster had forgotten the enigma contained in his son's letter, to hurry to the market place; for, if the doctor was in the church to read the ordinary of the mass, it was a question of losing two hundred and fifty thousand francs. It must be confessed, the fears of the heirs appealed to the strongest and most legitimate of social sentiments, family interest.

"Well, Monsieur Minoret," said the Mayor—once a miller who had become a Royalist, a Levrault-Crémière,—"when the devil was old, the devil a monk would be. They say your uncle is one of us."

"Better late than never, cousin," replied the postmaster, trying to conceal his vexation.

"How he would laugh," he said, "if we were disappointed! He would be capable of marrying his son to that damned girl, whom may the devil enfold with his tail!" cried Crémière, shaking his fists, and pointing to the mayor under the porch.

"What is the matter with father Crémière?" said the butcher of Nemours, the eldest son of a Levrault-Levrault. "Is he not pleased to see his uncle going the way of Paradise?"

"Who would ever have believed it?" said the clerk.

"Ah! one must never say: 'Fountain, I will not drink of your water,'" replied the notary, who, seeing the group from afar, left his wife and let her go alone to church.

"Now see, Monsieur Dionis," said Crémière, taking the notary by the arm, "what would you advise us to do under these circumstances?"

"I would advise you," said the notary, addressing the heirs, "to go to bed and get up at your usual hours, to eat your soup before it grows cold, to put your feet in your slippers, your hats upon your heads, in short, to continue your manner of life exactly as if nothing had happened."

"You are not comforting," said Massin, giving him the look of a crony.

In spite of his small stature and embonpoint, and in spite of his coarse, squat face, Crémière Dionis was as sharp as a bristle. To make money, he had secretly entered into partnership with Massin, whom he doubtless told of the straitened peasants and the patches of ground to be devoured. These two men thus picked out their business, letting no good thing escape them, and sharing the profits on this mortgage usury, which hinders, but does not stop the influence of the peasants over the soil. And so, it was not so much for Minoret the postmaster, or Crémière the tax-collector, as for the sake of his friend the clerk that Dionis took so keen an interest in the doctor's inheritance. Massin's share, sooner or later was to swell the capital with which the two partners operated in the district.

"We will try to find out through Monsieur Bongrand where this blow comes from," replied the notary in a low voice whilst cautioning Massin to keep close.

"But what are you doing here, Minoret?" suddenly cried a little woman, bursting into the group in the middle of which the postmaster looked like a tower, "you do not know where Désiré is and there you stay planted on your legs gossiping when I thought you were on horseback!—Good-morning, mesdames and messieurs."

This thin, pale, fair little woman, dressed in a white print gown with large chocolate-colored flowers, with an embroidered lace-trimmed cap, and wearing a little green shawl over her flat shoulders, was the postmistress who made the roughest postilions, servants and carters tremble; who kept the cash-box and the books, and managed the household with a finger and a glance, according to the popular expression of the neighbors. Like all true housewives, she wore no jewels. She did not believe, so she said, in tinsel and gewgaws; she pinned her faith to what was solid, and in spite of the fête, kept on her black apron, in the pockets of which jangled a bunch of keys. Her squeaking voice grated upon the drum of the ear. Notwithstanding the tender blue of her eyes, her severe glance was in obvious harmony with the thin lips of a pursed-up mouth, with a high, bulging and extremely imperious forehead. Sharp as was the glance of the eye, still sharper were the gestures and words. "Zélie, obliged to

have a will for two, had always had enough for three," Goupil used to say, and he called attention to the successive reigns of three tidy young postilions, each of whom had been set up by Zélie after seven years' service. And so the malicious clerk called them Postilion I., Postilion II. and Postilion III. But the small amount of influence exercised by these young men in the house, and their perfect obedience proved that Zélie had been purely and simply interested in steady, good fellows.

"Well then, Zélie loves zeal," replied the clerk to those who made such remarks to him.

This scandal was very improbable. Ever since the birth of her son, whom she had nursed herself without anyone being able to tell how, the postmistress had thought of nothing but increasing her fortune, and applied herself unceasingly to the management of her immense establishment. To steal a truss of straw or two or three bushels of oats, to deceive Zélie in the most complicated accounts was an impossibility although she wrote like a cat and knew no more arithmetic than addition and subtraction. She never went out except to measure her hay, her aftermaths and her oats; then she would send her husband to the harvest and her postilions to the binding, telling them, within a hundred pounds, the quantity that such and such a meadow should yield. Although she was the soul of that great fat body called Minoret-Levrault, and although she led him by the end of that absurdly turned-up

nose, she used to experience frights, which more or less, always agitate tamers of wild beasts. And so she would constantly fly into rages before him, and the postilions knew, by the scoldings Minoret gave them, when he had been quarreling with his wife, for the fury rebounded on them. La Minoret was also as clever as she was mercenary. All over the town in more than one household this remark used to be made: "Where would Minoret be without his wife!"

"When you know what has happened," replied the Master of Nemours, "you yourself will be exasperated."

"Well, what is it?"

"Ursule has taken Doctor Minoret to mass."

Zélie Levrault's pupils dilated, she stood for a moment, yellow with anger, said, "I must see it to believe it!" and dashed into the church. The mass had got as far as the Elevation of the Host. Befriended by the general meditation, La Minoret was then able to look into each row of chairs and benches, whilst proceeding along the chapels until she came to Ursule's place, where she saw the old man, bareheaded, beside her.

By recalling the faces of Barbé-Marbois, Boissy d'Anglas, Morellet, Helvétius and Frederick the Great, you will at once have an exact picture of the head of Doctor Minoret, whose green old age resembled that of these famous persons. These heads, as if struck from the same coin, for they adapt themselves to medals, present a severe and almost

puritanical profile, cold coloring, mathematical proportions, a certain narrowness in the almost concise face, keen eyes and serious mouths, something aristocratic, less in the sentiment than in the habits, more in the ideas than in the character. All have high foreheads, but with a sloping at the top, which betrays a materialistic tendency. You will find these chief characteristics of head and likeness of face in the portraits of all the encyclopedists, the orators of the Gironde, and the men of that time whose religious beliefs were almost nil, who called themselves deists and were atheists. The deist is an atheist without his obligations. Old Minoret had this sort of a forehead, but furrowed with wrinkles, and which acquired a kind of naïveté from the way in which his silvery hair, drawn back like that of a woman at her toilette, curled in light tufts over his black coat, for he was obstinately dressed, as in his youth, in black silk stockings, gold buckled shoes, paduasoy breeches, a white waistcoat crossed by the black ribbon, and a black coat decorated with the red rosette. This distinguished head, whose cold whiteness was softened by the yellow tones of old age, was in the full light of a window. Just when the postmistress arrived, the doctor's blue eyes, with moistened lids and softened outlines, were fixed upon the altar; a new conviction gave them a new expression. His spectacles marked the place at which he had left off reading in his prayer-book. With his arms crossed on his chest, this tall, gaunt old man, standing in an attitude expressive

of the omnipotence of his faculties and something immovable in his faith, never ceased contemplating the altar with a humble look, revived by hope, refusing to look at his nephew's wife, planted almost in front of him as if to reproach him with this return to God.

Seeing all eyes turning upon her, Zélie hastened out, and returned to the market-place less precipitately than she had entered the church; she counted on this inheritance, and the inheritance was becoming problematical. She found the clerk, the tax-collector and their wives even more dismayed than before; Goupil had delighted in teasing them.

"We cannot talk over our affairs in the market-place and before all the town," said the postmistress; "come to my house. You will not be in the way, Monsieur Dionis," she said to the notary.

In this way, the probable disinheriting of the Massins, the Crémières and the postmaster was to be the talk of the country.

Just as the heirs and the notary were about to cross the square on their way to the post-house, the sound of a diligence arriving full tilt at the office, which was a few steps from the church, at the top of the Grand'Rue, made a tremendous noise.

"Bless my soul! I am like you, Minoret, I am forgetting Désiré," said Zélie. "Let us go and see him get down; he is almost a barrister, and it is a matter that concerns him."

The arrival of a stage coach is always a distraction; but, when it is late, some incident is to be

expected; and so the crowd moved in front of the *Ducler.*

"There is Désiré!" was the universal cry.

Désiré, at once the tyrant and boon companion of Nemours, always set the town in a flutter by his visits. His presence roused up the young people, by whom he was liked, and with whom he was open-handed; but his amusements were so much dreaded, that more than one family rejoiced to see him go off to study and read for the bar at Paris. Désiré Minoret—a thin young man, slender and fair like his mother, from whom he got his blue eyes and pale complexion—smiled out of the window at the crowd, and jumped out lightly to kiss his mother. A slight sketch of this boy will prove how pleased Zélie was at seeing him.

The student wore thin boots, white trousers of some English material with patent leather straps, a handsome fashionable tie even more beautifully tied, a stylish fancy waistcoat, and in this waistcoat pocket, a flat watch with a hanging chain, and lastly, a short frockcoat of blue cloth and a gray hat; but the gold buttons of the waistcoat and the ring worn outside the violet-colored kid gloves betrayed the parvenu. He carried a cane with a chased gold knob.

"You will lose your watch," said his mother, kissing him.

"It is done on purpose," he replied, submitting to his father's embrace.

"Well, cousin, you will soon be a barrister?" said Massin.

"I shall take the oath at the re-opening," he said, answering the friendly greetings from the crowd.

"Then we shall have some fun?" said Goupil shaking his hand.

"Ah! there you are, old monkey," replied Désiré.

"You still take out a license for argument after your argument for a license," retorted the clerk, mortified at being treated so familiarly before so many people.

"What! he tells him to hold his tongue?" Madame Crémière asked her husband.

"You know what I brought, Cabirolle!" cried Désiré to the old violet-hued, pimple-faced guard, "have it all taken to the house."

"The perspiration is streaming off your horses," said the harsh Zélie to Cabirolle; "have you no better sense than to drive them like that? You are more stupid than they are!"

"But Monsieur Désiré wanted to arrive as quickly as possible, in order to relieve your anxiety—"

"But, as there was no accident, why risk losing your horses?" she rejoined.

The recognition of friends, the good-mornings, the outbursts of the young people around Désiré, all the incidents of the arrival and the account of the accident which had caused the delay, took so much time that the band of heirs, with the addition of their friends, arrived in the market-place just as mass was ended. By chance, which indulges in everything, Désiré saw Ursule under the church porch as he was passing, and he stopped, stupefied by her

beauty. The young lawyer's movement necessarily stopped his parents' progress.

Obliged, by giving her arm to her godfather, to hold her prayer-book in her right hand and her umbrella in the other, Ursule was then displaying the innate grace that graceful women show in performing all the fastidious details belonging to a woman's charming calling. If thought is revealed as a whole, it must be admitted that this demeanor expressed a divine simplicity. Ursule was dressed in a white muslin gown cut like a dressing-gown trimmed at various points with blue bows. The tippet, edged with ribbon to match run through a wide hem, and tied with bows similar to those on the dress, gave glimpses of the beauty of her bust. The charming tone of her ivory-white neck was set off by all the blue, the disguise of all blondes. Her blue sash with long floating ends outlined a flat, apparently flexible waist, one of the most alluring charms of the sex. She wore a rice-straw hat, simply trimmed with ribbons to match her dress, with the strings tied under the chin, which, whilst it relieved the extreme whiteness of the hat, in no way destroyed that of her beautiful fair complexion. On each side of Ursule's face, which seemed to lend itself naturally to a headdress à la Berthe, were big smooth plaits of fine fair hair with little tresses which caught the eye with their thousand glistening projections. Her gray eyes, at once gentle and proud, harmonized with a well-shaped forehead. A pink color diffusing her cheeks like a cloud, animated her

regular but not insipid face, for Nature, by some rare privilege, had given her both purity of line and of physiognomy. The dignity of her life betrayed itself in the admirable harmony between her features, movements and the general expression of her person, which might have served as a model for Trust or Modesty. Her health, although brilliant, did not break out coarsely, so she had a distinguished appearance. Under her light-colored gloves, one might guess at her pretty hands. Her slender, arched feet were delicately shod in bronze kid shoes fringed with brown silk. Her blue sash, distended by a little flat watch and her blue purse with golden tassels, attracted the eyes of all the women.

"He has given her a new watch!" said Madame Crémière, squeezing her husband's arm.

"What! is that Ursule?" cried Désiré, "I never should have recognized her."

"Well, my dear uncle, you are causing a sensation," said the postmaster, pointing to the whole town drawn up in two lines on each side of the old man's path, "everyone wants to see you."

"Is it the Abbé Chaperon or Mademoiselle Ursule who has converted you, uncle?" said Massin with jesuitical obsequiousness, bowing to the doctor and his protégée.

"It is Ursule," said the old man dryly, walking all the time like a man beset.

Even if the evening before, whilst finishing his whist with Ursule, the doctor of Nemours and

Bongrand, at these words said by the old man, "To-morrow I shall go to mass!" the justice of the peace had not replied, "Your heirs will sleep no more!" it would have needed only a single glance from the shrewd, clear-sighted doctor to penetrate the frame of mind of his heirs at sight of their faces. Zélie's irruption into the church, her look that the doctor caught, this assembly of all the parties concerned, in the market-place, and the expression of their eyes as they saw Ursule, all betrayed renewed hatred and sordid fears.

"This is your doing, mademoiselle!" resumed Madame Crémière, also interposing with a humble curtsey. "A miracle costs you nothing."

"He belongs to God, madame," replied Ursule.

"Oh! God!" cried Minoret-Levrault, "my father-in-law used to say that He served as a cloak for many a horse."

"He had the opinions of a horse-dealer," said the doctor severely.

"Well," said Minoret to his wife and son, "are you not going to greet my uncle?"

"I could not control myself before this demure-looking chit," cried Zélie, carrying off her son.

"You would do well, uncle," said Madame Massin, "not to go to church without a little black velvet cap, the church is very damp."

"Bah! my niece," said the old man, looking at those who accompanied him, "the sooner I am laid to rest, the sooner you will dance."

He continued walking the whole time, dragging

Ursule with him, and seemed so hurried, that they were left alone.

"Why did you speak so harshly to them? It is not right," said Ursule, shaking his arm rebelliously.

"Before, as after my entry into religion, my hatred will be the same for all hypocrites. I have done good to them all, I have asked no gratitude from them; but not one of those people sent you a flower on your birthday, the only day I celebrate."

At a fairly long distance from the doctor and Ursule, Madame de Portenduère was dragging herself along apparently overcome with grief. She belonged to that class of old women whose dress revives the spirit of the last century, who wear violet gowns, with flat sleeves and cut in a fashion which is only seen in the portraits of Madame Lebrun; they wear black lace mantles, and old-fashioned hats in keeping with their slow, solemn step; one would think they were always walking with their hoops, and that they still felt them round them, like those who have had an arm cut off sometimes move the hand that is lost; their long, pale faces, with great bruised eyes, and withered foreheads are not without a certain melancholy grace, in spite of the towering hair and flattened curls; they wrap their faces up in old laces that refuse any longer to wave about the cheeks; but all these ruins are overruled by an incredible dignity of manner and looks. This old lady's wrinkled, red eyes told plainly enough that she had been crying during mass. She was going along like a person in trouble, and seemed

to be expecting someone, for she turned round. Now, Madame de Portenduère turning round was as serious an act as that of Doctor Minoret's conversion.

"Whom does Madame de Portenduère want?" said Madame Massin, rejoining the heirs, who were petrified by the old man's answers.

"She is looking for the curé," said the notary Dionis, who struck his forehead like a man overcome by some recollection or a forgotten idea, "I have something to tell you all, and the inheritance is saved! Let us go and breakfast happily with Madame Minoret."

It may be imagined with what eagerness the heirs followed the notary to the post-house. Goupil accompanied his friend, arm-in-arm, whispering to him with a hideous smile:

"There are some gay women."

"What do I care?" replied the son of the family, shrugging his shoulders, "I am madly in love with Florine, the most heavenly creature in the world."

"And who is Florine?" asked Goupil. "I care for you too much to let you be bamboozled by any creatures."

"Florine is the famous Nathan's passion, and my folly is useless, for she has positively refused to marry me."

"Women who are foolish with their bodies are often wise in their heads," said Goupil.

"If only you could see her, you would not make use of such expressions," said Désiré languishingly.

"If I saw you blighting your future for what can

be but a whim," rejoined Goupil with an earnestness that would have deceived even Bongrand, "I would go and crush that doll as Varney crushes Amy Robsart in *Kenilworth*! Your wife ought to be a D'Aiglemont, or a Mademoiselle du Rouvre, and help you to become a deputy. My future is mortgaged to yours and I shall not let you commit blunders."

"I am rich enough to be content with happiness," replied Désiré.

"Well, what are you plotting there?" said Zélie to Goupil, hailing the two friends who were standing in the middle of her enormous yard.

The doctor disappeared into the Rue des Bourgeois, and reached, as nimbly as any young man, the house where, during the week, the strange event had come to pass which was then disturbing the whole town of Nemours, and which needs some explanation to elucidate this story and the notary's communication to the heirs.

*

The doctor's father-in-law, the famous harpsichord player and instrument maker, Valentine Mirouët, one of our most celebrated organists, died in 1785, leaving a natural son, the child of his old age, acknowledged and bearing his name, but an exceedingly worthless fellow. Upon his deathbed, he was denied the consolation of seeing this spoilt child. Joseph Mirouët, singer and composer, after having come out at the Italiens under an assumed name, had eloped to Germany with a young girl. The old manufacturer commended this really talented boy to his son-in-law, reminding him that he had refused to marry the mother so as not to wrong Madame Minoret. The doctor promised that he would give half the inheritance of the manufacturer, whose business had been bought by Erard, to this wretched man. He made diplomatic inquiries about his natural brother-in-law, Joseph Mirouët; but Grimm told him one night that after having enlisted in a Prussian regiment the artist had deserted, taking a false name, and had baffled all pursuit. For fifteen years Joseph Mirouët, gifted by nature with a seductive voice, a desirable figure, a handsome face, besides being a composer full of taste and spirit, led that bohemian life which has been so well described by the Berlinese Hoffmann. And so, when about forty years old, he was the victim of

such terrible poverty, that in 1806, he snatched at the chance of becoming a Frenchman once more. He then settled at Hamburg, where he married the daughter of a worthy bourgeois, mad about music, who fell in love with the artist, whose success was always in perspective and to which she wished to devote herself. But, after fifteen years of destitution, Joseph Mirouët could not withstand the intoxication of wealth; his natural extravagance reappeared; and, though he made his wife happy, he spent her fortune in a very few years. Poverty returned. The household must have led the most horrible existence for Joseph Mirouët to have come to engaging himself as a musician in a French regiment. In 1813, by the merest chance, the surgeon-major of this regiment, struck by the name of Mirouët, wrote to Doctor Minoret, to whom he owed obligations. The answer was not long in coming. In 1814, before the capitulation of Paris, Joseph Mirouët had a refuge in Paris, where his wife died in giving birth to a little girl whom the doctor wished to call Ursule, after his wife. The band captain did not survive the mother, exhausted as she too had been by fatigue and misery. When dying, the unfortunate musician left his daughter to the doctor, who stood as her godfather, in spite of his repugnance for what he called the mummeries of the church.

After having seen all his children perish successively through miscarriages, in painful confinements or during their first year, the doctor had awaited the

result of the last experience. When a sickly, nervous, delicate woman begins with a miscarriage, it is no uncommon thing to see her behaving during pregnancy and in her confinements as Ursule Minoret did, in spite of her husband's care, attentions and science. The poor man often reproached himself for their mutual persistence in wishing for children. The last one, conceived after an interval of two years, died during the year 1792, the victim of the mother's nervous condition, if those physiologists are to be believed who think that, in the unaccountable phenomena of generation, the child takes after the father in blood, and after the mother in its nervous system. Forced to renounce the enjoyment of his strongest feeling, the doctor's benevolence was doubtless in revenge of his disappointed paternity. During his conjugal life, so cruelly disturbed, the doctor had, above all, longed for a little fair-haired girl, one of those flowers which gladden a whole house; so he joyfully accepted the legacy left him by Joseph Mirouët, and over the orphan revived the expectations of his vanished dreams. For two years, he superintended, as Cato once did for Pompey, the minutest details of Ursule's life; he would not let the wet-nurse suckle her, dress her, or put her to bed without him. His experience and his science were all at this child's disposal. After having felt all the sorrows, the alternations of fear and hope, the labors and joys of a mother, he had the happiness of seeing this daughter of the blonde German woman and the French artist develop a

vigorous life, and a profound sensitiveness. The happy old man followed with a maternal solicitude the growth of this fair hair, first down, then silk, then light and fine hair, so endearing to the fingers that stroke it. He often kissed the naked little feet, the toes of which, covered with film, showing the blood beneath, were like rose buds. He was mad about this little girl. When she tried to speak, or when she fixed her beautiful soft blue eyes on all objects, with that reflective look which seems to be the dawning of thought and which she ended in a laugh, he would remain beside her for hours together, seeking, with Jordy, the reasons, which so many other people call caprices, hidden under the slightest phenomena of this delicious phase of life when the child is at once blossom and fruit, a confused intelligence, a perpetual movement, and a passionate longing. Ursule's beauty and gentleness endeared her so much to the doctor, that he would have liked to change all the laws of Nature for her; he sometimes told old Jordy that his teeth ached when Ursule was cutting hers. When old men love children, they place no bounds upon their passion, but adore them. For the sake of these little beings, they suppress their hobbies, and for them call to mind their own past. Their experience, indulgence and patience, all the acquisitions of life, so painfully hoarded a treasure, they give up to the young life through which they grow young again, and so supply the place of maternity by intelligence. Their ever-watchful

wisdom is as good as the mother's intuition; they recollect the niceties which with her are divination, and they show them in the exercise of a compassion whose strength doubtless develops in proportion to this great tenderness. The slowness of their movements supplies the place of the maternal gentleness. In short, with them as with children, life is reduced to simplicity; and if sentiment makes a slave of the mother, the detachment of all passion and the absence of all self-interest permits an old man to give himself up entirely. It is also no uncommon thing to see children on good terms with old people. The old soldier, the old curé and the old doctor, happy in Ursule's caresses and coquetries, never tired of answering her or playing with her. Far from fretting them, this child's petulance delighted them, and they gratified all her wishes whilst making everything a subject for instruction. And so this little girl grew surrounded by old people who smiled upon her and were like so many mothers around her, equally attentive and prudent. Thanks to this learned education, Ursule's mind developed in the sphere most congenial to it. This rare plant lit upon its particular soil, inhaled the elements of its true life and assimilated the floods of light from its sun.

"In what religion will you bring up this little one?" asked the Abbé Chaperon of Minoret when Ursule was six years old.

"In yours," replied the physician.

An atheist like Monsieur de Wolmar in *La Nouvelle*

Héloïse, he did not consider he had the right to deprive Ursule of the benefits offered by the Catholic religion. The doctor, seated on a bench below the window of the Chinese study, then felt the curé press his hand.

"Yes, curé, every time that she speaks to me of God, I shall send her to her friend *Sapron*," he said, imitating Ursule's childish way of speaking. "I want to see if religious feeling is innate. And so I have done nothing for or against the tendencies of this young mind; but I have already appointed you in my heart as her spiritual father."

"God will count this to you, I hope," replied the Abbé Chaperon, gently striking his hands together and lifting them towards the sky as if in brief mental prayer.

And so, from the age of six, the little orphan fell under the curé's religious influence, as she had already fallen under that of her old friend Jordy.

The captain, formerly a professor in one of the old military colleges, and applying himself by choice to grammar and the differences between the European tongues, had studied the problem of a universal language. This learned man, patient like all old masters, made it his delight to teach Ursule to read and write, whilst teaching her the French language and all that she had to know of arithmetic. The doctor's vast library permitted the choice of books suitable for a child, and which might amuse as well as instruct it. The soldier and the curé left this intelligence to thrive upon the ease and

liberty that the doctor allowed the body. Ursule learnt whilst she was playing. Religion restrained reflection. Given up to the divine culture of a disposition led into pure regions by these three prudent instructors, Ursule was more inclined to sentiment than duty, and took the voice of Conscience rather than the social law as her rule of conduct. With her, whatever was beautiful in feelings or actions had to be spontaneous; her judgment would confirm the impulse of the heart. She was meant to do good as a pleasure before doing it as an obligation. This distinction is the characteristic of the Christian religion. These principles, more than any others made for mankind, become a woman, the genius and conscience of the family, the secret refinement of domestic life, in fact, almost a queen in the bosom of the household. All three proceeded in the same way with the child. Far from shrinking from the audacity of innocence, they would explain to Ursule the purpose of things and all known means whilst never formulating any but the most accurate ideas for her. When, in regard to a plant, a flower or a star she would make direct inquiries about God, the professor and the doctor would tell her that the priest alone could answer her. None of them ever encroached on the others' territory. The godfather undertook all material well-being and things of this life; the education concerned Jordy; the morals, metaphysics and higher questions belonged to the curé. This splendid education was not thwarted by injudicious servants, as so often happens in the

wealthiest households. La Bougival, who had been lectured on the subject, and who was besides much too simple in mind and character to interfere, never disturbed the work of these noble men. Ursule, who was a privileged being, was in this surrounded by three good genii, and by her beautiful disposition rendered their tasks both easy and light. This virile tenderness, this gravity tempered by smiles, this liberty without danger, and this perpetual care of soul and body, made her, at nine years of age, an accomplished and charming child. Unhappily, this paternal trinity dissolved. In the following year the old captain died, leaving his work to be continued by the doctor and the curé, after having accomplished the most difficult part. Flowers ought to grow of themselves in so well prepared a soil. For nine years the old gentleman had saved up a thousand francs a year, in order to leave ten thousand francs to his little Ursule so that she might keep some souvenir of him all through her life. In a will, the contents of which were touching, he begged his legatee to use the four or five hundred francs income returned by this little capital entirely for her dress. When the justice of the peace affixed the seals at his old friend's house, they found in a cabinet which he had never allowed anybody to look into, a great quantity of toys, many of which were broken, and which all had been used, toys of days gone by, religiously preserved, and that the poor captain requested Monsieur Bongrand himself should burn.

About this time, Ursule was to take her first communion. The Abbé Chaperon spent a whole year preparing this young girl, whose heart and intelligence, both so developed, but so discreetly kept in check by each other, required a particular spiritual nurture. Such was this initiation into the knowledge of things divine, that, from the time the soul takes its religious shape, Ursule became the pious, mystic young girl whose character always rose above events, and whose heart dominated all adversity. It was then that a struggle secretly began between incredulous old age and believing childhood, for a long time unknown to her who provoked it, the issue of which was occupying the whole town, and was to have so great an influence over Ursule's future by exciting the doctor's collateral heirs against her.

During the first six months of the year 1824, Ursule spent nearly all her mornings at the presbytery. The old doctor guessed the curé's intentions. The priest wanted to make Ursule an invincible argument. The unbeliever, loved by his godchild as if she had been his own daughter, would believe in this ingenuousness, would be won by the moving results of religion in the soul of a child whose love resembled those trees in Indian climates that are always laden with flowers and fruit, always green

and always perfumed. A beautiful life is always more forcible than the most vigorous reasoning. One cannot resist the charms of certain pictures. And so the doctor's eyes insensibly filled with tears when he saw the daughter of his heart going to church, dressed in white crêpe, shod in white satin shoes, adorned with white ribbons, her head encircled by a royal fillet fastened at the side with a big bow, the thousand curls streaming over her beautiful white shoulders, the bodice edged with a ruche trimmed with narrow ribbon, her eyes starry with a first hope, flying high and happy to a first union, loving her godfather more since she had soared up to God. When he saw the thought of eternity feeding this soul which had been till lately in the limbo of childhood, as after the night the sun gives life to the earth, still without knowing why, he felt angry at remaining alone at home. Seated on his flight of steps, he kept his eyes a long time fixed on their own gate through the bars of which his ward had vanished, saying: "Godfather, why do you not come? How can I be happy without you?" Although shaken to its very roots, the encyclopedist's pride would not yet give way. Still he walked out so that he could see the procession of communicants, and distinguished his little Ursule shining with exaltation under her veil. She gave him an inspired look which moved, in the stony portion of his heart, the corner that was closed to God. But the deist held out, and he said to himself:

"Mummeries! To imagine, that, if there does

exist a creator of the world, the organizer of the infinite pays any attention to this foolery!"

He laughed and continued his walk on the heights that overlook the road to Gâtinais, where the full pealing of the bells spread afar the joy of families.

The sound of backgammon is unbearable to people who do not know this game, one of the most difficult that exist. To avoid worrying his ward, whose delicacy of organs and nerves prevented her from listening with impunity to these movements and to this apparently senseless chatter, the curé, old Jordy, when he was alive, and the doctor, would always wait until their child had gone to bed or for a walk. It often happened that the game was still going on when Ursule came in; she would then resign herself with infinite grace and seat herself near the window to work. She disliked this game, the beginning of which is in fact dull and difficult to many minds, and which is so difficult to master, that, if one does not get into the habit of playing this game during youth, it is almost impossible to learn it later. Now, the night of her first communion, when Ursule returned to her guardian, who was alone that evening, she placed the backgammon in front of the old man.

"Now then! whose turn is it to play?" she said.

"Ursule," replied the doctor, "is it not a sin to mock your godfather on the day of your first communion?"

"I am not mocking you at all," she said, sitting down, "I belong to your pleasures, you who take

care of all mine. When Monsieur Chaperon was pleased, he used to give me a lesson in backgammon, and he has given me so many lessons, that I am now quite able to win—You shall no longer put yourself out for me. So as not to hinder your pleasures, I have conquered all the difficulties, and I like the noise of backgammon."

Ursule won. The curé came and surprised the players and rejoiced in her triumph. The next day, Minoret, who had hitherto refused to have his ward taught music, went to Paris, bought a piano, made arrangements at Fontainebleau with a mistress and resigned himself to the annoyance that his ward's continual practice was bound to cause him. One of the prophecies of the late Jordy the phrenologist was realized; the little girl became an excellent musician. The guardian, proud of his godchild, then engaged an old German called Schmucke, a learned professor of music, to come from Paris once a week, and provided for the expenses of this art, which he had first thought perfectly useless in a household. Unbelievers do not like music, a celestial language developed by catholicism, which has borrowed the names of the seven notes in one of its hymns; every note is the first syllable of the first seven verses of the hymn to St. John. Although vivid, the impression produced upon the old man by Ursule's first communion was only temporary. The calmness and content diffused throughout this young mind by works of charity and prayer were also meaningless examples to him. Without any

cause for remorse or repentance, Minoret enjoyed a perfect serenity. In carrying out his kindnesses without any hope of a heavenly harvest, he considered himself loftier than the catholic, whom he always accused of usury with God.

"But," the Abbé Chaperon would say, "if all men would devote themselves to this trade, you must confess that society would be perfect. There would be no more poor. To be charitable in your way, one must be a great philosopher; you raise yourself to your doctrine by reasoning, you are a social exception; whilst it suffices to be a Christian to be charitable according to ours. With you, it is an effort; with us, it is natural."

"That means, curé, that I think and you feel, that's all."

And yet, at twelve years of age, Ursule, whose naturally feminine penetration and cleverness had been trained by a superior education, and whose reason, in all its bloom, was enlightened by a religious spirit, of all kinds of spirits the most delicate, ended by understanding that her godfather believed neither in a future, nor in the immortality of the soul, neither in providence nor in God. Plied with questions by the innocent creature, it was impossible for the doctor to hide this fatal secret any longer. Ursule's artless consternation made him smile at first; but, seeing her sometimes sad, he understood the depth of affection that this sadness betokened. Despotic love has a horror of any kind of disagreement even in ideas that are alien to it. Sometimes,

the doctor yielded to his adopted daughter's softly, tenderly spoken arguments as if they were caresses, breathed by the warmest and purest affection. Believers and unbelievers speak two different languages and can never agree. The godchild, in pleading God's cause, would ill-treat her godfather just as a spoilt child sometimes ill-treats its mother. The curé gently reproved Ursule, and told her that God reserved the right to humble these haughty spirits. The young girl answered that David had discomfited Goliath. This religious difference and the regrets of the child who wanted to win her guardian to God were the only sorrows of this home life, so sweet and satisfied, hidden away from the eyes of the inquisitive little town. Ursule was growing and developing, and becoming the modest and religiously educated young girl that Désiré had admired coming out of church. The culture of flowers in the garden, music, her guardian's pleasures and all the little attentions that Ursule paid him—for she had relieved La Bougival by attending to him—filled the hours, days and months of this quiet existence. Nevertheless, for a year the doctor had been anxious about some trouble with Ursule; but the cause had been so much expected, that he did not worry himself further than to watch over her health. And yet, this sagacious observer and profound practitioner thought that these troubles had had some sort of echo in the mind. He watched his ward as a mother would, but could not see anyone around her who was

worthy of inspiring her with love, and so his anxiety passed.

At this juncture, one month before the day upon which this drama commences, one of those events took place in the doctor's intellectual life which ploughs up the field of conviction to the chalk and overturns it; but this event requires a brief account of several incidents of his medical career, which will moreover give fresh interest to this story.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, science was as entirely divided about Mesmer's appearance, as art had been about that of Gluck. After having discovered magnetism, Mesmer came to France, where from time immemorial inventors have flocked to obtain recognition of their discoveries. France, thanks to her intelligible language, is in some sort the trumpet of the world.

"If homeopathy reaches Paris, it is safe," said Hahnemann lately.

"Go to France," said Monsieur de Metternich to Gall, "and, if they jeer at your bumps, you will be famous."

Mesmer had, then, followers and antagonists as keen as were the Piccinists against the Gluckists. Learned France was roused and a solemn discussion opened. Before pronouncing any decision the Faculty of Medicine in a body proscribed Mesmer's so-called charlatanism, his tub, his divining rod and his theories. But, it must be said, this German unfortunately compromised his magnificent discovery by preposterous pecuniary claims. Mesmer

failed through uncertainty about facts, through ignorance of the rôle played by hitherto unobserved imponderables in Nature, through his inaptitude for investigating the different sides of a triple-faced science. Magnetism has more applications; in Mesmer's hands it was, as regards its prospects, what principle is to effect. But, if the inventor was lacking in genius, it is sad for human reason and for France to have to state that a contemporary science of the societies, cultivated equally by Egypt and Chaldea, by Greece and India, experienced in Paris in the middle of the eighteenth century the fate that truth had met with in the person of Galileo in the sixteenth century, and that magnetism was scouted by the united attacks of religious people and materialistic philosophers, alike alarmed. Magnetism, Christ's favorite science and one of the divine powers remitted to the apostles, seemed to have been no more foreseen by the Church than by the disciples of Jean-Jacques, Voltaire, Locke and Condillac. The Encyclopedia and the clergy could not reconcile themselves to this old human power which seemed so new. The miracles of the Convulsionaries, hushed up by the Church and the indifference of scholars, in spite of the valuable pamphlets of the Councillor Carré de Montgeron, were the first summons to make experiments with the human fluids which give the power to oppose interior forces sufficiently to annul the suffering caused by exterior agents. But it was necessary to recognize the existence of intangible, invisible and imponderable

fluids, three negations which the science of that time insisted upon considering as a definition of space. In modern philosophy, space does not exist. Ten feet of space and the world would crumble to pieces! According to materialists particularly, the world is full, everything is connected, everything is linked together and everything is contrived. "The world," said Diderot, "as the result of chance, is more explicable than God. The multiplicity of causes and the measureless number of rays that chance implies explains the creation. Given the Eneid and all the characters necessary to its composition, and given the time and the space, by means of tossing up the letters, I should arrive at the combination of the Eneid." Those wretched men, who deified anything rather than acknowledge God, also shrank before the infinite divisibility of matter that the nature of imponderable forces admits of. Locke and Condillac then delayed for fifty years the immense progress that the natural sciences now make under the idea of unity due to the great Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. Several upright men, without any system, convinced by facts conscientiously considered, persisted in Mesmer's doctrine, which recognized in man the existence of a penetrating influence, leading from man to man, worked by the will, healing by the abundance of fluid, the exercise of which constituted a duel between two wills, between an evil to be cured and the will to cure it. The phenomena of somnambulism, barely surmised by Mesmer, were due to Messieurs de Puységur and Deleuze;

but the Revolution put a stop to these discoveries which gave success to the cause of the scholars and mockers. A few doctors were amongst the believers. Until their death these dissenters were persecuted by their fellow-physicians. The respectable body of Paris doctors displayed all the harshness of the religious wars towards the Mesmerists, and were as cruel in their hatred for them as it was possible to be in that time of Voltairean tolerance. The orthodox doctors refused to consult with those doctors who favored the Mesmeric heresy. In 1820, these so-called arch-heretics were still the object of this secret proscription. The miseries and storms of the Revolution did not extinguish this scientific hatred. Only priests, magistrates and doctors can hate like that. The gown is always terrible. But are not ideas also much more implacable than things? Doctor Bouvard, one of Minoret's friends, believed in the new faith, and persisted until his death in the science to which he had sacrificed his peace in life, for he was one of the *bêtes-noires* of the Faculty of Paris. Minoret, one of the stoutest upholders of the Encyclopedists, the most formidable enemy of Deslon, Mesmer's provost, and whose pen carried enormous weight in this dispute, quarreled irrevocably with his fellow-physician; he went even further, and persecuted him. His treatment of Bouvard was to cause him the only regret that troubled the serenity of his declining age. Since Doctor Minoret's retirement to Nemours, the science of imponderables, the only name that tallies with

magnetism, which is so closely allied by the nature of its phenomena to light and electricity, was making immense progress, in spite of the ceaseless jeers of Parisian science. Phrenology and physiognomy, twin sciences of Gall and Lavater, of which one is to the other what cause is to effect, proved to the eyes of more than one physiologist the traces of an imperceptible fluid, the base of the phenomena of the human will, the source of the passions and habits, the forms of face and those of the skull. In short, magnetic facts, and somnambulistic miracles, those of divination and entrancement which permitted penetration into the spiritual world, were accumulating. The strange and well-established story of the apparitions of farmer Martin, and this peasant's interview with Louis XVIII.; the knowledge of Swedenborg's relations with the dead, so seriously established in Germany; Walter Scott's accounts of the effects of *second sight;* the exercise of the prodigious faculties of several fortune-tellers who jumble up chiromancy, cartomancy and horoscopy into one science; the feats of catalepsy and those of the working of the properties of the diaphragm by certain morbid affections; these phenomena, all emanating from the same source and at least curious, were undermining many doubts and leading the most indifferent to the ground of experiment. Minoret knew nothing of this march of intelligence, so great in the north of Europe, still so feeble in France, where those facts were nevertheless taking place, which were styled marvelous by superficial

observers, and which fall, like stones to the bottom of the sea, into the turmoil of Parisian events.

At the beginning of this year, the anti-mesmerist's peace was disturbed by the following letter:

"MY OLD FRIEND,

"Every friendship, even if lost, has its rights which are with difficulty prescribed. I know that you are alive, and I retain less recollection of our enmity than of our happy days in the wretched lodging of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre. Just as I am about to leave this world I am anxious to prove to you that magnetism will constitute one of the most important sciences, if, however, all science is not *one*. I can overwhelm your incredulity with positive proofs. Perhaps I may be indebted to your curiosity for the pleasure of shaking your hand once more, as we used to do before Mesmer.

"Always yours,

"BOUVARD."

Stung as a lion is stung by a gad-fly, the anti-mesmerist flew to Paris and left his card at old Bouvard's house, in Rue Férou, near Saint-Sulpice. Bouvard left a card at his hotel, writing on it: "To-morrow, at nine o'clock, Rue Saint-Honoré, opposite the Assumption." Minoret, grown young once more, did not sleep. He went to see the old doctors of his acquaintance, and asked them if the world was upside down, if there was a College of Medicine, if the four Faculties still survived. The doctors re-assured him by saying that the old spirit of resistance still existed; only, instead of persecuting, the Academy of Medicine and the Academy of Science grossly ridiculed whilst ranking the magnetic feats

with the surprises of Comus, Comte, and De Bosco, and as jugglery, conjuring and what is known as entertaining physics. This talk in no way deterred old Minoret from keeping the appointment made by old Bouvard. After forty-four years of enmity, the two opponents met again under a gateway in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Frenchmen are too continually distracted to hate each other long. In Paris particularly, events enlarge space too much and by politics, literature and science make life too vast for men not to be able to find countries to conquer where their pretensions may reign at ease. Hatred requires so many forces ready armed, that one has to keep in touch with them when one tries to hate very long. Moreover the body only can have any recollection of it. After forty-four years, Robespierre and Danton would embrace each other. And yet, neither of the doctors offered his hand. Bouvard was the first to say to Minoret:

"You look wonderfully well."

"Yes, not bad, and you?" replied Minoret once the ice was broken.

"I? Just as you see."

"Has magnetism prevented you from dying?" asked Minoret in a pleasant tone, but without bitterness.

"No, but it nearly prevented my living."

"Then you are not rich?" said Minoret.

"Bah!" said Bouvard.

"Well, I am rich," cried Minoret.

"It is not your fortune, but your conviction that I want. Come along," answered Bouvard.

"Oh! you obstinate man!" cried Minoret.

The Mesmerist dragged the unbeliever into a rather dark stairway and made him go up carefully to the fourth story.

Just then an extraordinary man was making himself known in Paris, gifted by faith with an incalculable power, and making use of the magnetic powers in all their applications. Not only did this great unknown, who is yet living, himself suddenly and radically cure the most cruel and most inveterate illnesses from a distance, like the Saviour of mankind did formerly; but he would also produce the most curious instantaneous phenomena of somnambulism by mastering the most rebellious wills. The physiognomy of this stranger, who is said to depend only upon God and to communicate with the angels, like Swedenborg, resembles a lion; a concentrated, irresistible strength flashes from it. His singularly distorted features have a terrible and startling appearance; his voice, which comes from the depths of his being, is as if charged with magnetic fluid, it penetrates the hearer through every pore. Disgusted by the public ingratitude after thousands of cures, he has fallen back into impenetrable solitude, into voluntary nothingness. His all-powerful hand, which has restored dying daughters to their mothers, fathers to their weeping children, idolizing mistresses to their frenzied lovers; which has cured sick people given up by the doctors,

which caused hymns to be sung in synagogues, temples and churches by priests of different creeds all brought to the same God by the same miracle; which softened the agonies of the dying, to whom life was impossible; this sovereign hand, the sun of life which dazzled the closed eyes of somnambulists, will not raise itself to restore an heir presumptive to a queen. Wrapt in the memory of his good deeds as if in a shining shroud, he refuses to see anybody and lives in the skies. But, at the dawn of his reign, almost astonished at his own power, this man, whose disinterestedness has equaled his power, permitted a few inquisitive people to be witnesses of his miracles. The fame of this celebrated man, which was unbounded and which might revive again to-morrow, roused Doctor Bouvard at the brink of the grave. The persecuted mesmerist could at last see the most radiant phenomena of this science, guarded in his heart like a treasure. The misfortunes of this old man had touched the great stranger, who allowed him several privileges. And so Bouvard, going up the stairs, suffered his old antagonist's jests with malicious joy. His only answer was, "You will see! You will see!" and those little tosses of the head indulged in by people who are sure of their facts.

The two doctors entered a more than modest apartment. Bouvard went to talk for a moment in a bedroom adjoining the drawing-room where Minoret, whose mistrust was awakening, was waiting;

but Bouvard came to fetch him directly and ushered him into this room occupied by the mysterious Swedenborgian and a woman seated in an armchair. This woman did not get up at all, and did not seem to notice the entrance of the two old men.

"What! no more tub?" said Minoret, smiling.

"Nothing but the power of God," gravely replied the Swedenborgian, who appeared to Minoret to be about fifty years old.

The three men sat down, and the stranger began to talk. They talked about the weather, to the great surprise of old Minoret, who thought he was being humbugged. The Swedenborgian questioned the visitor upon his scientific opinions, and evidently seemed to be taking time to examine him.

"You come here out of mere curiosity, monsieur," he finally said. "I am not in the habit of prostituting a power, which, in my conviction, emanates from God; if I were to make a bad or frivolous use of it, it might be withdrawn from me. Nevertheless, it is a question, so Monsieur Bouvard tells me, of changing a contrary opinion to our own, and of enlightening an honest scholar; so I will gratify you. This woman whom you see," he said, pointing to the strange woman, "is in a somnambulistic sleep. According to the confessions and manifestations of all somnambulists, this condition constitutes a delicious life during which the inmost being, freed from all the fetters which are brought into the exercise of its faculties by visible nature, wanders through the world which we wrongly call

invisible. Sight and hearing then exercise themselves more perfectly than in the condition called *waking*, and possibly without the aid of those organs which are the sheaths for those luminous swords called sight and hearing! For a man put into this condition, distances and material objects do not exist, or are traversed by a life that is within us, and for which our body is a reservoir, a necessary prop, an envelope. Terms are wanting for such freshly recovered effects; for nowadays the words *imponderable*, *intangible*, *invisible*, have no meaning relative to the fluid whose action is demonstrated by magnetism. Light is weighable by its heat, which, by penetrating bodies, increases their volume, and electricity is certainly only too tangible. We have condemned things instead of accusing the imperfection of our agents."

"Is she asleep?" said Minoret, examining the woman, who seemed to him to belong to the inferior class.

"Her body is in some degree annihilated," replied the Swedenborgian. "Ignorant people take this condition for sleep. But she will prove to you that there exists a spiritual universe and that the soul does not recognize the laws of the material universe. I will send her to any region that you wish, twenty leagues away or to China; she will tell you what is happening there."

"Send her to my home only, at Nemours," Minoret requested.

"I will have nothing to do with it," replied the

mysterious man. "Give me your hand; you shall be both actor and spectator, cause and effect."

He took Minoret's passive hand; he held it for a moment whilst appearing to be collecting himself, and with his other hand seized the hand of the woman sitting in the armchair; then he placed the doctor's in that of the woman, whilst signing to the old unbeliever to seat himself beside this priestess without a tripod. Minoret noticed a slight quivering in this woman's exceedingly calm features when they were united by the Swedenborgian; but this movement, although marvelous in its effect, was wonderfully simple.

"Obey this gentleman," said this person, extending his hand over the woman's head, who seemed to inhale both light and life from him, "and remember that all you do for him will please me."

"Now you can speak to her," said he to Minoret.

"Go to Nemours, Rue des Bourgeois, to my house," said the doctor.

"Give her time, leave your hand in hers until she proves to you by what she tells you that she has got there," said Bouvard to his old friend.

"I see a river," replied the woman in a feeble voice whilst seeming to be looking within herself with profound attention, in spite of her lowered lids, "I see a pretty garden—"

"Why do you go in by the river and the garden?" said Minoret.

"Because they are there."

"Who?"

"The young girl and the nurse of whom you are thinking."

"What is the garden like?" asked Minoret.

"On the right as you go in by the little stairway leading down to the river, there is a long brick gallery in which I see books, and ending in a rambling barracks decorated with little wooden bells and red eggs. On the left, the wall is covered with a clump of climbing plants, Virginia creeper, and Virginia jasmine. In the centre is a little sundial. There are many pots of flowers. Your ward examines her flowers, shows them to her nurse, makes holes with a dibble and puts in some seeds—The nurse is raking the paths—Although this young girl is as pure as an angel, there is a dawning of love within her, faint as the morning twilight."

"For whom?" asked the doctor, who till now, was persuaded that no one could tell him anything without being somnambulistic. He always believed there was some jugglery.

"You know nothing about it, although you were lately somewhat anxious when she grew into a woman," she said smiling. "The working of her heart has followed that of Nature—"

"And it is a common working-woman who speaks like this?" cried the old doctor.

"In this state people express themselves with peculiar clearness," replied Bouvard.

"But whom does Ursule love?"

"Ursule does not know that she is in love," replied the woman, with a little movement of the head,

"she is much too angelic to know desire or anything whatever about love; but she is engrossed by him, she thinks of him, she even resists it, but returns to it in spite of her determination to refrain. —She is at the piano—"

"But who is it?"

"The son of a lady who lives opposite—"

"Madame de Portenduère?"

"Portenduère, do you say?" rejoined the somnambulist, "I daresay. But there is no danger, he is not in the country."

"Have they spoken to each other?" asked the doctor.

"Never. They have looked at each other. She thinks him charming. In fact, he is a handsome man and has a good heart. She has seen him from her window, they have also seen each other in church; but the young man thinks no more about it."

"His name?"

"Ah! to tell you that, I must read it or hear it—He is called Savinien, she has just uttered his name; she finds it sweet to pronounce; she has already looked out his birthday in her almanac, she has put a little red dot against it—Such childishness! Oh! she will love well, but with as much purity as strength; she is not a girl to love twice, and love will tinge her soul and penetrate it so thoroughly that it will drive out every other feeling."

"Where do you see that?"

"Within her. She will know how to suffer; she

NEMOURS, RUE DES BOURGEOIS.

"Obey this gentleman," said this person, extending his hand over the woman's head, who seemed to inhale both light and life from him, "and remember that all you do for him will please me."

"Now you can speak to her," said he to Minoret.

"Go to Nemours, Rue des Bourgeois, to my house," said the doctor.

has this from someone, for her father and mother have suffered much!"

This last remark upset the doctor, who was less staggered than surprised. It may be as well to note here that ten or fifteen minutes elapsed between each of the woman's sentences, during which her attention became more and more concentrated. They could see her looking! Her forehead presented an extraordinary appearance; the inward efforts were depicted there, it cleared or contracted through some power the effects of which Minoret had only remarked in dying persons at those moments in which they are gifted with the power of prophecy. Several times she made gestures which were like Ursule's.

"Oh! question her," resumed the mysterious person addressing Minoret, "she will tell you secrets that you alone can know."

"Does Ursule love me?" continued Minoret.

"Almost as much as she does God," she said with a smile, "she is also very unhappy about your unbelief. You do not believe in God, as if you could prevent Him from being! His word fills the world! In this you are the only cause of anxiety to this poor child—Ah! she is playing scales; she wishes she were an even better musician than she is, she frets about it. This is what she is thinking: 'If I could sing well, if I had a beautiful voice, when he comes to his mother's my voice would reach his ears.'"

Doctor Minoret took out his pocket-book and noted down the exact time.

"Can you tell me what sort of seeds she has sown?"

"Mignonette, sweet peas, balsam—"

"And the last?"

"Larkspur."

"Where is my money?"

"At your notary's; but you invest it cautiously without losing a single day's interest."

"Yes; but where is the money I keep at Nemours for my half-yearly expenditure?"

"You put it in a big book bound in red, entitled *Pandects of Justinian*, volume II., between the last two leaves; the book is above the glass-paneled sideboard in the folio division. You have a whole row of it. Your funds are in the last volume, on the salon side. Stay! volume III. is before volume II. But you have no money, it is—"

"Bills of one thousand francs?" asked the doctor.

"I cannot see clearly, they are folded up. No, there are two bills of five hundred francs each."

"Can you see them?"

"Yes."

"What are they like?"

"One is very yellow and old, the other white and almost new.—"

This last part of the examination startled Doctor Minoret. He looked at Bouvard stupefied; but Bouvard and the Swedenborgian, accustomed to the astonishment of unbelievers, were talking in a low voice without appearing either surprised or astounded. Minoret begged them to let him return

after dinner. The anti-Mesmerist wanted to collect himself, to recover his profound terror, to test afresh this immense power, to submit it to decisive experiments, to put it questions whose solution should remove every kind of doubt.

"Be here at nine o'clock to-night," said the stranger; "I will come back for you."

Doctor Minoret was in such a violent state, that he left without bowing, followed by Bouvard, who cried out to him at intervals:

"Well? Well?"

"I think I am mad, Bouvard," replied Minoret on the step of the gateway. "If the woman has told the truth about Ursule, and as Ursule is the only person in the world who knows what this sorceress has revealed to me, *you will be right.* I wish I had wings to go to Nemours to verify her assertions. But I shall hire a carriage and leave to-night at ten o'clock. Ah! I am losing my head."

"What would happen to you if, having known an invalid incurable for many years, you saw him cured in five seconds; if you saw this great magnetizer make perspiration pour profusely from a person who had ringworm; if you saw him make a crippled woman walk?"

"Let us dine together, Bouvard, and do not leave me until nine o'clock. I want to try a decisive unimpeachable experiment."

"Very well, my old friend," replied the mesmerist doctor.

The two enemies, reconciled, went to dine at the

Palais-Royal. After an animated conversation which helped Minoret to divert the fever of ideas that was ravaging his brain, Bouvard said to him:

"If you acknowledge that this woman has the faculty of reducing or of traversing space, if you admit the certainty that, from the Assumption, she hears and sees all that is being said and done at Nemours, then you must admit all the other magnetic effects, which to an unbeliever are as incredible as these are. So ask her for one proof only that shall satisfy you, for you may think that we procured all this information; but we could not know, for instance, what will take place at nine o'clock, in your house, in your ward's room; remember or write down what the somnambulist will see or hear, and then hurry home. This little Ursule, whom I do not know at all, is not our accomplice; and, if she has said or done what you have written, then bow your head, proud Sicambrus!"

The two friends returned to the room, and there found the somnambulist, who did not recognize Doctor Minoret. This woman's eyes gently closed under the hand which the Swedenborgian stretched over her at intervals, and she resumed the attitude in which Minoret had seen her before dinner. When the woman's hand and the doctor's had been placed in communication, he begged her to tell him all that was passing at his house in Nemours at that moment.

"What is Ursule doing?" he said.

"She is undressed, she has finished putting on

her curl-papers, she is kneeling on her prie-Dieu, in front of an ivory crucifix fastened on a red velvet panel."

"What is she saying?"

"She is saying her evening prayers, she commends herself to God, beseeches Him to keep her mind from evil thoughts; she examines her conscience and goes over all she has done during the day, in order to know if she has failed in any of His commandments or those of the church. In fact, she sifts her soul, poor dear little creature!"—The somnambulist's eyes were wet.—"She has not committed any sin, but she reproaches herself with having thought too much about Monsieur Savinien," she continued, "she breaks off to wonder what he is doing in Paris, and prays God to make him happy. She finishes with you and says a prayer aloud."

"Can you repeat it?"

"Yes."

Minoret took his pencil and wrote, at the somnambulist's dictation, the following prayer, evidently composed by the Abbé Chaperon:

"'O God! if Thou art pleased with Thy servant, who adores Thee, and prays to Thee with as much love as fervor, who tries in every way to keep Thy Holy Commandments, who would gladly die as did Thy Son to glorify Thy name, and who would dwell within Thy shadow, Thou who readest all hearts, graciously deign to open my godfather's eyes, set him in the way of salvation, and impart to him Thy grace so that he may live his last days in Thee;

keep him from all harm and let me suffer in his stead! Good Saint-Ursule, my beloved patroness, and Thou, Divine Mother of God, queen of Heaven, archangels and saints of Paradise, hear me, and join Thy intercessions to mine, and have pity upon us!'"

The somnambulist imitated the child's innocent gestures of holy inspirations so perfectly, that Doctor Minoret's eyes were full of tears.

"Does she say anything else?" asked Minoret.

"Yes."

"Repeat it."

"'Dear godfather! who will play backgammon with him in Paris?' She blows out the candle, lays her head down, and goes to sleep. Now she is off! She looks very pretty in her little nightcap."

Minoret bowed to the great stranger, shook hands with Bouvard, rapidly descended the stairs, and ran to a coach-stand which then existed under the gateway of a hôtel that has since been demolished to make way for the Rue d'Alger; there he found a driver and asked him if he would agree to start at once for Fontainebleau. Once the fare was settled and accepted, the old man, once more revived, set out immediately. According to his agreement, he rested the horse at Essonne, caught the diligence for Nemours, found a place in it, and dismissed his cabman. Reaching home about five in the morning, he went to bed amidst the ruins of all his previous ideas about physiology, nature, and metaphysics, and slept until nine o'clock, so greatly had his journey tired him.

Upon waking, quite sure that, since his return, no one had crossed the threshold of his door, the doctor proceeded, not without an unconquerable dread, to the verification of facts. He himself was ignorant of the difference between the two bank bills and the change of the volumes of the *Pandects*. The somnambule had seen well. He rang for La Bougival.

"Tell Ursule to come to speak to me," he said, sitting down in the middle of his library.

The child came, ran to him and kissed him; the doctor took her on his knee, where she sat mingling her beautiful fair locks with her old friend's white hairs.

"Is anything the matter, godfather?"

"Yes, but promise me, by your salvation, to answer my questions frankly, without evasion."

Ursule blushed right up to her forehead.

"Oh! I shall not ask you anything that you cannot tell me," he continued, seeing the shame of first love troubling the hitherto childish purity of those beauutiful eyes.

"Speak, godfather."

"With what thought did you finish your evening prayers yesterday, and at what time did you say them?"

"It was a quarter-past nine, half-past nine."

"Well then, repeat me your last prayer."

The young girl hoped that her voice might communicate her faith to the unbeliever; she left her place, knelt down, joined her hands fervently, a radiant light illumined her face, she looked at the old man and said:

"What I asked of God yesterday, I asked this morning, and I will ask for it until it is granted me."

Then she repeated her prayer with renewed and more powerful expression; but, to her great astonishment, her godfather interrupted her by finishing the prayer.

"All right, Ursule," said the doctor, taking his godchild on his knee again. "When you went to sleep with your head on the pillow, did you not say to yourself, 'That dear godfather! who will play backgammon with him in Paris?' "

Ursule sprang up as if the trump of the Judgment Day had sounded in her ears; she gave a cry of terror; her dilated eyes gazed at the old man with horrible fixity.

"Who are you, godfather? From whom do you get such a power?" she asked, supposing that, not to believe in God, he must have made a compact with the angel of darkness.

"What did you sow in your garden yesterday?"

"Mignonette, sweet peas and balsam."

"And lastly some larkspur?"

She fell on her knees.

"Do not frighten me, godfather; but you were here, were you not?"

"Am I not always with you?" replied the doctor, jesting in order to respect this innocent creature's reason, "let us go to your room."

He gave her his arm and went up the stairs.

"Your legs are trembling, my dear friend," she said.

"Yes, I am as if thunderstruck."

"Are you at last going to believe in God?' she cried with artless joy, showing the tears in her eyes.

The old man looked at the simple, pretty room he had arranged for Ursule. On the floor, a plain, cheap, green carpet that she kept in exquisite cleanliness; on the walls, a pale gray paper strewn with roses and their green foliage; the windows, which looked on the courtyard, were hung with calico curtains trimmed with a band of some pink stuff; between the two windows, under a long, high glass, was a gilded wooden bracket covered with marble upon which stood a blue Sèvres vase that she used to fill with flowers; and, opposite the fireplace, a little chest of drawers in charming marquetry with a top of the marble known as *breccia* of *Aleppo*. The bed, hung with old chintz and with curtains of pink-lined chintz, was one of those duchess beds so common in the eighteenth century, and which was ornamented with a tuft of feathers carved above the four fluted posts at each angle. An old clock, encased in a sort of tortoise-shell monument encrusted with ivory arabesques, adorned the mantelpiece, of which the marble top and candlesticks,

and the glass with its gray painted frame presented a remarkable harmony of tone, color and style. A big wardrobe, the doors of which were covered with landscapes made in different woods, some of which were of a green tint, and which are no longer to be found in the trade, doubtless contained her linen and dresses. In this room he breathed the fragrance of Heaven. The exact arrangement of things showed a spirit of order and a sense of harmony which would certainly have struck everybody, even a Minoret-Levrault. One could especially see how much Ursule loved the things that surrounded her, and how she delighted in a room which was bound up, so to speak, with her childhood and girlhood life. Reviewing everything according to its bearings, the guardian ascertained that it was possible to see over into Madame Portenduère's from Ursule's room. During the night, he had reflected on the line of conduct he ought to take with Ursule concerning the secret surprise of this growing passion. An examination would compromise him with his ward. Either he must approve or disapprove of this love; in either case, his position would be false. So he had determined to examine the respective situations of young Portenduère and Ursule to find out whether he ought to fight against this partiality before it became irresistible. An old man only could display so much wisdom. Still quivering under the blows of the truth of the magnetic facts, he kept turning round and looking at the smallest objects in the

room, and he wanted to cast his eye over the almanac hung at the corner of the fireplace.

"These horrid candlesticks are too heavy for your pretty little hands," he said, taking up the candlesticks of marble decorated with copper.

He weighed them in his hand, looked at the almanac, took it and said:

"This seems to me very ugly also. Why do you keep this postman's almanac in such a pretty room?"

"Oh! do let me have it, godfather."

"No, you shall have another one to-morrow."

He went down with this convincing proof, shut himself up in his study, looked for Saint Savinien, and found, as the somnambulist had said, a tiny, red dot in front of the nineteenth of October; he also saw one opposite the day of Saint Denis, his own patron saint and before Saint Jean, the curé's patron. This point, the size of a pin's head, the sleeping woman had seen in spite of distance and obstacles. Until night time the old man meditated upon these events, which were even more immense to him than to anyone else. He was bound to yield to evidence. A strong wall crumbled away, so to speak, within him, for he lived supported by two foundations; his indifference to religious matters and his disbelief in magnetism. By proving that the senses, a purely physical construction, organs whose powers were accounted for, were bounded by some of the attributes of the infinite, magnetism overthrew, or at least seemed to him to overthrow, Spinosa's powerful argumentation; the infinite and

the finite, two elements that according to this great man were incompatible, proved to be one within the other. Whatever power he might have accorded to divisibility, to the mobility of matter, he could not admit that it had half-divine qualities. After all, he had grown too old to connect these phenomena with a system, to compare them with those of sleep, sight, and light. All his science, based upon the assertions of the school of Locke and Condillac, was in ruins. Seeing his hollow idols in pieces, his incredulity necessarily faltered. And so all the advantage in this struggle beween Catholic childhood and Voltairean old age, was to be with Ursule. A light was streaming on this dismantled fort, and on these ruins. The voice of prayer was bursting from the bosom of the fragments! Nevertheless, the stubborn old man picked a quarrel with his doubts. Although he was struck to the heart, he would not make up his mind, and constantly struggled against God. And yet, his spirit seemed wavering, he was no longer the same. Dreamy beyond measure, he would read Pascal's *Pensées.* Bossuet's sublime *Histoire des Variations,* he read Bonald and Saint-Augustin; he also insisted upon running through the works of Swedenborg and the late Saint-Martin, of which the mysterious man had spoken. The edifice built up in this man by materialism was cracking in every part, it only needed one more shake; and, when his heart was ripe for God, he fell into the heavenly vineyard as the fruits fall. Several times already whilst playing with the

curé, his godchild beside them, he had asked questions, which, considering his opinions, appeared strange to the Abbé Chaperon, yet ignorant of the inward labor with which God was redressing this beautiful conscience.

"Do you believe in apparitions?" asked the unbeliever of his pastor whilst interrupting the game.

"Cardan, a great philosopher of the sixteenth century, has said that he has seen some," replied the curé.

"I know all those that have engrossed scholars, I have just read Plotin over again. At this moment, I am questioning you as a Catholic, and ask you if you think that a dead man can revisit the living."

"But Jesus appeared to His Apostles after His death," rejoined the curé. "The church must have faith in our Saviour's apparitions. As to miracles, they are not wanting," said the Abbé Chaperon, smiling, "would you care to hear the most recent? It happened during the eighteenth century."

"Bah!"

"Yes, the blessed Marie-Alphonse de Liguori knew of the Pope's death far away from Rome, the very moment when the Holy Father was expiring, and there are numerous witnesses of this miracle. The sainted bishop, being in a trance, heard the sovereign pontiff's last words and repeated them before several persons. The courier entrusted to announce it to the Bishop, only arrived thirty hours after—"

"Jesuit!" replied old Minoret, jokingly, "I do

not ask you for proofs, I ask you if you believe in it."

"I believe that the apparition depends very much on the person who sees it," said the curé, still teasing the unbeliever.

"My friend, I am not laying a trap for you; what do you believe in all this?"

"I believe the power of God to be infinite," said the abbé.

"When I am dead, if I become reconciled with God, I will pray Him to let me appear to you," said the doctor, laughing.

"That is precisely the agreement made between Cardan and his friend," replied the curé.

"Ursule," said Minoret, "if ever any danger threatens you, call me and I will come."

"You have just said in one word the touching elegy entitled *Néère*, by André Chénier," replied the curé. "But poets are only great because they know how to clothe facts or the sentiments of eternally living pictures."

"Why do you speak of your death, dear godfather?" said the young girl in a mournful tone. "We Christians do not die, our tomb is the cradle of our soul."

"Well," said the doctor, smiling, "we must some day leave this world, and when I am no longer here, you will be very much astonished at your good fortune."

"When you are no more, my beloved friend, my only consolation will be to devote my life to you."

"To me, dead?"

"Yes. All the good works that I might be able to do should be done in your name to redeem your mistakes. I should pray to God every day, so that in His infinite mercy He might not eternally punish the errors of a day, and that He might place a soul as beautiful and pure as yours close to Himself, among the souls of the blessed."

This answer, said with angelic candor and pronounced in an accent full of conviction, overwhelmed fallacy and converted Denis Minoret as Saint-Paul was converted. A ray of inward light dazzled him, whilst this tenderness, reaching all through his life to come, made his eyes fill with tears. There was something electric in this sudden effect of grace. The curé clasped his hands and rose, disturbed. The child, astonished at her success, burst into tears. The old man stood up as if someone had called him, gazed into space as if he could see some aurora, then he bent his knee upon his armchair, folded his hands and cast his eyes upon the ground like a profoundly humiliated man.

"O God!" he said in a voice of emotion, and raising his forehead, "if anyone can obtain my forgiveness and lead me to Thee, is it not this spotless creature? Forgive the repentant old age that this glorious child offers Thee!"

He mentally lifted up his soul to God, praying Him to complete his enlightenment by His science after having overwhelmed him with His mercy; he turned to the curé and stretching out his hand, said:

"My dear pastor, I am a little child again, I belong to you and give you up my soul."

Ursule covered her godfather's hand with joyful tears and kisses. The old man took the child upon his knees and called her gaily his godmother. The curé, completely moved, recited the *Veni, Creator*, in a sort of religious effusion. These three kneeling Christians used this hymn as their evening prayer.

"What is the matter?" asked La Bougival, astonished.

"At last my godfather believes in God," replied Ursule.

"Ah! upon my faith! he only needed that to be quite perfect," cried the old *Bressane*, crossing herself with grave naïveté.

"Dear doctor," said the good priest, "you will soon understand the greatness of religion and the necessity of its observances; you will find its philosophy, as regards its humanity, much loftier than that of the most daring intelligence."

The curé, who displayed an almost childish delight, then agreed to catechise the old man whilst conferring with him twice a week. Thus, the conversion attributed to Ursule and to a spirit of sordid calculation was spontaneous. The curé, who had refrained for fourteen years from touching the wounds of this heart, even whilst deploring them, had been applied to as one sends for the surgeon when one knows one's self to be hurt. Since this scene, every night the prayers pronounced by Ursule had been said together. From time to time the old man had

felt peace succeeding to agitation within him. Having, as he said, God for a responsible editor for unaccountable things, his mind was at rest. His beloved child answered that by this he could well see that he was advancing in the kingdom of God. During mass, he had just been reading the prayers whilst applying his senses to them, for he had risen after a first conference to the divine idea of communion among all believers. This old neophyte had understood the eternal symbol attaching to this food, which faith renders necessary when it has been fathomed in its inmost, deep, and joyful meaning. If he had seemed in haste to return home, it was to thank his dear little godchild for having made him take the cowl, according to the beautiful expression of times gone by. And so he was holding her on his knee in the salon and giving her a holy kiss on the forehead at the very moment when, soiling so sacred an influence with their ignoble fears, his collateral heirs were lavishing the coarsest abuse upon Ursule. The old man's eagerness to get home, his asserted scorn of his relations, and his biting answers upon leaving the church were naturally attributed by each of the heirs to the hatred for them with which Ursule was inspiring him.

Whilst the godchild was playing to her godfather variations of Weber's *Last Thought*, a fine plot was hatching in the dining-room of the Minoret-Levrault household which was to result in bringing on the scene one of the chief persons in this

drama. The breakfast, noisy like all provincial breakfasts and enlivened by some excellent wines which reach Nemours by the canal, either from Burgundy or La Touraine, lasted more than two hours. Zélie had sent for some shell-fish, salt water fish and various gastronomic dainties, in order to celebrate Désiré's return.

The dining-room, in the middle of which the round table presented a gladdening sight, looked like an inn-room. Satisfied with her quantity of stock, Zélie had built a pavilion between her immense yard and her garden planted with vegetables and full of fruit trees. Everything, with her, was only for cleanliness and solidity. Levrault-Levrault's example had seemed terrible to the country. And so she forbade her architect to lead her into any similar nonsense. This room was consequently hung with a glazed paper, furnished with walnut chairs, walnut sideboards, and adorned with a faïence stove, a timepiece and a barometer. If the plates and dishes were of common white china, the table was conspicuous through the linen and abundant silver. Once the coffee had been served by Zélie, who was on the move like a leaden shot in a bottle of champagne, for she contented herself with a cook; when Désiré, the future barrister, had been told all about the great event of the morning and its consequences, Zélie shut the door, and the notary Dionis was requested to speak. From the silence that ensued, and from the look that each heir fixed upon this authentic face, it was easy to

recognize the dominion that such men exercise over families.

"My dear children," said he, "your uncle, having been born in 1746, is eighty-three years old today; now, old men are subject to follies, and this little—"

"Viper!" cried Madame Massin.

"Wretch!" said Zélie.

"Let us call her only by name," rejoined Dionis.

"Well then, she is a thief," said Madame Crémière.

"A pretty thief," replied Désiré Minoret.

"This little Ursule," resumed Dionis, "he is very fond of. In the interest of you all, my clients, I did not wait until this morning to seek information, and this is what I know about this young—"

"Despoiler!" cried the tax-gatherer.

"Legacy-hunter!" said the clerk.

"Chut! my friends," said the notary, "or I take my hat, leave you and say good-night."

"Come, papa," cried Minoret pouring out for him a small glass of rum, "take it! it came from Rome itself. Indeed, it is worth a franc's stage-fees."

"It is true that Ursule is the legitimate daughter of Joseph Mirouët; but her father is the natural son of Valentin Mirouët, your uncle's father-in-law. So Ursule is Doctor Denis Minoret's natural niece. As a natural niece, the will the doctor may make in her favor would be hardly assailable; and, if he left her his fortune in this way, you would bring a sufficiently serious action for yourselves against

Ursule, as one cannot maintain that there is no bond of parentage between Ursule and the doctor; but this suit would certainly frighten a defenceless young girl and might lead to some compromise."

"The severity of the law upon the claims of natural children is so great," said the newly-made licentiate, anxious to show off his knowledge, "that, according to the terms of a decision of the supreme Court of Appeal of the seventh of July, 1817, a natural child can lay claim to nothing from his *natural grandfather*, not even maintenance. So you see how they have widened the *parentage* of the natural child. The law pursues the natural child even to its legitimate descent, for it alleges that the liberality shown to the grandchildren applies to the natural son by *interposition* of person. This results from comparing Articles 757, 908 and 911 of the Civil Code. The Royal Court of Paris on the twenty-sixth of December of last year also reduced the legacy left to the legitimate child of the natural son by the grandfather, who, most assuredly, as a grandfather, was as much of a stranger to the natural grandson as the doctor, as an uncle, could be to Ursule."

"All that," said Goupil, "seems to me only to concern the question of gifts made by the grandparents to the natural descendants; it is no question at all of the uncles, who do not appear to me to have any tie of kindred with the legitimate children of their natural brothers-in-law. Ursule is a stranger to Doctor Minoret. I recollect a decision

of the Royal Court of Colmar, made in 1825, whilst I was finishing reading for the law, by which it was declared that once a natural child was deceased, his descendants could no longer be the object of *interposition.* Now, Ursule's father is dead."

Goupil's argument produced what, in accounts of legislative sittings, journalists describe by this parenthesis: (*Profound Sensation*).

"And what does that signify?" cried Dionis, "that the case of gifts made by the uncle of a natural child has never yet come before the court; but, let it come, and the severity of the French law toward natural children would be all the more enforced as we live in an age in which religion is respected. And I can also answer for it that over this lawsuit there would be a compromise, particularly when you can have been persuaded to drive Ursule to the Court of Appeal."

The delight of heirs finding heaps of gold broke out into smiles, starts, and gestures all round the table, which prevented them from noticing a denial from Goupil. Then, after this outburst, profound silence and anxiety followed the notary's first word, a most terrible word:

"But—"

Dionis then saw all eyes staring at him, and all faces set in the same expression just as if he had pulled the string on one of those little stages where all the characters walk in jerks by means of machinery.

"But no law can prevent your uncle from adopting

or marrying Ursule," he resumed. "As for adoption it could be contested and I think you would gain your cause; the royal courts do not trifle on the subject of adoption, and you would be heard at the inquiry. It is all very well the doctor wearing the ribbon of Saint-Michel, being an officer of the Legion of Honor and former physician to the Ex-Emperor, he will die. But, if you are forewarned in case of adoption, how would you know of the marriage? The old man is sly enough to go and marry in Paris after a year's residence, and requite his intended, in the marriage settlements, by a dowry of a million. Therefore the only act that can endanger your inheritance is the marriage of the little one and your uncle."

Here the notary paused.

"There is yet another danger," said Goupil again, with a knowing look, "that of a will made to a third, old Bongrand, for instance, who might hold a legacy trust for Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët."

"If you worry your uncle," resumed Dionis, cutting short his head clerk, "and if you are not kind to Ursule, you will drive him either into marriage, or into the legacy trust of which Goupil has spoken; but I do not believe him capable of resorting to a legacy trust, a dangerous means. As to marriage, it is easy to prevent that. Désiré only has to pay her the least attention and she would always prefer a charming young man, the cock of Nemours, to an old man."

"Mother," whispered the postmaster's son to

Zélie, as much allured by the sum as by Ursule's beauty, "if I were to marry her, we should have all."

"Are you mad? You who will one day have an income of fifty thousand francs and who are to become a deputy! As long as I am alive you shall not be ruined by an idiotic marriage. Seven hundred thousand francs?—a fine thing! The mayor's only daughter will have fifty thousand francs income, and has already been proposed to me—"

This answer, the first time his mother had ever spoken harshly to him, extinguished any hope that Désiré might have had of marrying the lovely Ursule, for his father and he would never be able to prevail against the determination written in Zélie's terrible blue eyes.

"Eh! but see here, Monsieur Dionis," cried Crémière, nudged by his wife, "if the old man took the thing seriously and married his ward to Désiré whilst giving her the reversion to all his fortune, good-bye to the inheritance! And if he only lives another five years our uncle will have pretty well a million."

"Never," cried Zélie, "in my lifetime shall Désiré marry the daughter of a bastard, a charity-girl, picked up in a market-place! Bless me! my son is to represent the Minorets at his uncle's death, and the Minorets can boast of five hundred years of good citizens. It is quite as good as the nobility. Make yourselves easy about that; Désiré will marry when we know what he can become in the Chamber of Deputies."

This haughty declaration was seconded by Goupil, who said:

"Désiré, endowed with an income of twenty-four thousand francs, will become either president of the royal Courts or attorney-general, which leads to the peerage; and a foolish marriage would do for him."

The heirs then all talked to one another; but held their peace at Minoret's thump on the table to enable the notary to continue speaking.

"Your uncle is an honest, worthy man," resumed Dionis. "He believes himself to be immortal; and like all intelligent people, he will allow death to overtake him without having made a will. My opinion is therefore, that at present he should be urged to invest his capital in such a way as to render your dispossession difficult, and the chance has occurred. Young Portenduère is imprisoned at Sainte-Pélagie for debts of a hundred and odd thousand francs. His aged mother knows he is in prison, she cries like a Magdalen and is expecting the Abbé Chaperon to dinner, doubtless in order to discuss this disaster with him. Well, to-night I will go and persuade your uncle to sell his stock of five per cent consols, which are at one hundred and eighteen, and lend Madame de Portenduère, on her Bordières farm and on her house, the sum necessary to clear the prodigal child. I shall be in my character as notary in speaking for this little fool of a Portenduère, and it is very natural that I should wish to make him re-invest his stock; I gain the deeds, the sale and commission on it. If I can become his

adviser, I will propose other investments in land for the surplus of the capital, and I have some excellent ones in my office. Once his fortune is placed in landed estates or in trust mortgages in the country, it will not easily fly away. One can always cause difficulties to arise between the wish to realize and the realization."

The heirs, struck by the truth of this argument, much more skilful than that of Monsieur Josse, murmured approvingly.

"You must all act together," said the notary in conclusion, "so as to keep your uncle in Nemours, to which he is accustomed, and where you can watch him. By providing a lover for the little one, you prevent the marriage—"

"But suppose the marriage took place?" said Goupil, seized with an ambitious idea.

"Even that would not be so bad, for the loss would be enumerated, and one would know what the old man wishes to give her," replied the notary. "But if you let Désiré loose upon her, he can dawdle on with the little one until the old man's death. Marriages are made and unmade."

"The shortest way," said Goupil, "if the doctor is still going to live any length of time, would be to marry her to some good fellow, who would free you of her by settling with her at Sens, Montargis or Orléans, with a hundred thousand francs."

Dionis, Massin, Zélie and Goupil, the only clever heads in this assembly, exchanged four glances full of ideas.

"That would be the worm within the pear," whispered Zélie to Massin.

"Why did they let him come?" replied the clerk.

"That would suit you very nicely," cried Désiré to Goupil, "but could you ever keep yourself clean enough to please the old man and his ward?"

"You are not rubbing your stomach with a basket," said the postmaster who finally grasped Goupil's idea.

This coarse joke was a prodigious success. The head clerk scrutinized the laughers with such a terrible look, that silence was immediately restored.

"Nowadays," whispered Zélie to Massin, "notaries think only of their own interests; and suppose Dionis, in order to profit, went over to Ursule's side?"

"I am sure of him," replied the clerk, giving his cousin a look out of his malicious little eyes.

He was going to add, "I know enough to ruin him!" but checked himself.

"I am entirely of Dionis's opinion," said he, aloud.

"And I also," cried Zélie, who nevertheless suspected a collusion of interest between the notary and the clerk.

"My wife has voted," said the postmaster, sucking down a glass of brandy, although his face was already violet-colored from digesting the breakfast and from a remarkable absorption of liquor.

"That's all right," said the tax-gatherer.

"Then shall I go after dinner?" rejoined Dionis.

"If Monsieur Dionis is right," said Madame Crémière to Madame Massin, "we must visit our uncle in the evening as before, every Sunday, and do all that Monsieur Dionis has just told us."

"Yes, to be received as we used to be!" cried Zélie. "After all, we have a good income of more than forty thousand francs, and he has refused all our invitations; we are quite as good as he is. Even though I do not know how to make laws, I can steer my own bark."

"As I am far from having forty thousand francs a year," said Madame Massin, rather piqued, "I do not care to lose ten thousand!"

"We are his nieces, we will take care of him; we will keep our eyes open," said Madame Crémière, "and some day, cousin, you will be grateful to us."

"Treat Ursule well, the old man De Jordy left her his savings," said the notary, lifting his forefinger to his lips.

"I will be on my P's and Q's," cried Désiré.

"You were as clever as Desroches, the cleverest of all the Paris solicitors," said Goupil to his master as they left the post-house.

"And they discuss our fees!" replied the notary, smiling bitterly.

The heirs, who were seeing Dionis and his head clerk home, all met, their faces rather flushed by the breakfast, at the end of vespers. According to the notary's anticipations, the Abbé Chaperon was giving his arm to old Madame de Portenduère.

"She has dragged him to vespers," cried Madame Massin, drawing Madame Crémière's attention to Ursule and her godfather as they were leaving the church.

"Let us go and speak to him," said Madame Crémière, advancing toward the old man.

The change that the conference had wrought in all these faces surprised Doctor Minoret. He wondered what was the cause of this feigned friendliness, and, out of curiosity, favored the meeting of Ursule and the two women, eager to greet her with exaggerated affection and forced smiles.

"Uncle, will you allow us to come and see you tonight?" said Madame Crémière. "We have sometimes thought that we worried you; but it is such a long time since our children paid you their respects, and now our daughters are of an age to make acquaintance with our dear Ursule."

"Ursule is worthy of her name," replied the doctor, "she is very wild."

"Let us tame her," said Madame Massin. "And then, see here, uncle," added this good housewife, trying to hide her projects under a calculation of economy, "we were told that your dear godchild shows such wonderful talent on the piano-forte, that we should be delighted to hear her. Madame Crémière and I are rather inclined to have her master for our little ones; for, if he had seven or eight pupils, he might fix his charges within reach of our fortunes—"

"Willingly," said the old man, "and that would

be all the better as I also wish to give Ursule a singing-master."

"Well then, till to-night, uncle; we will come with your great-nephew Désiré, who is now a lawyer."

"Till to-night," replied Minoret, who wanted to fathom these shallow minds.

The two nieces squeezed Ursule's hand, saying to her with pretended graciousness:

"Au revoir."

"Oh! godfather, then you see into my heart?" cried Ursule, giving the old man a look full of gratitude.

"You have a voice," he said. "And I also want you to have drawing and Italian masters. A woman," resumed the doctor, looking at Ursule as he was opening the gate of his house, "ought to be brought up in such a way as to feel herself equal to any position in which her marriage may place her."

Ursule grew as red as a cherry; her guardian seemed to be thinking of the same person as she was. Feeling herself on the point of confessing the involuntary partiality which drove her to thinking of Savinien and connecting all her longing for perfection with him, she went and sat down under the clump of climbing plants, where, from afar, she stood out like a blue and white flower.

"You can quite see, godfather, how kind your nieces are to me; they were nice," she said, seeing him coming, and to throw him off the scent of the thoughts which had made her pensive.

"Poor little thing!" cried the old man.

He patted Ursule's hand as she laid it on his arm, and led her along the terrace beside the river, where no one could overhear them.

"Why do you say, 'Poor little thing?'"

"Do you not see that they are afraid of you?"

"But why?"

"All my heirs are just now very uneasy about my conversion; they have doubtless attributed it to the influence you exercise over me, and imagine that I shall disappoint them of my inheritance in order to enrich you."

"But that would not be?" said Ursule naïvely, looking at her godfather.

"Oh! heavenly consolation of my declining days!" said the old man, lifting up his ward and kissing her on both cheeks. "It is indeed for her and not for myself! O God! that I prayed Thee a moment ago to let me live until the day upon which I shall have entrusted her to some good being who is worthy of her! You will see, my little angel, the farce that the Minorets, Crémières and Massins will come and play here. You want to beautify and prolong my life, you do! Whereas they only think of my death—"

"God preserve us from hating; but, if that is so, —oh! I do indeed despise them!" said Ursule.

"Dinner!" cried La Bougival from the top of the steps, which, on the garden side, were at the end of the passage.

At dessert, Ursule and her guardian were in the pretty dining-room decorated with Chinese paintings in lacquer, the ruin of Levrault-Levrault, when the justice of the peace called. The doctor offered him, as a great mark of intimacy, a cup of his Mocha coffee mixed with Bourbon and Martinique coffee, burnt, ground and made by himself in a silver coffee-pot à la Chaptal.

"Well!" said Bongrand, lifting his spectacles and looking slyly at the old man, "the whole town is astir! your appearance in church has upset your relations! You are leaving your fortune to the priests and the poor! You have stirred them up, and they are fidgeting, ah! I saw their first outbreak in the square, they were as busy as ants who had been robbed of their eggs."

"What did I tell you, Ursule?" cried the old man. "At the risk of paining you, my child, ought I not to teach you to know the world, and to be on your guard against undeserved ill-will?"

"I should like to say a word to you on this subject," rejoined Bongrand, seizing this opportunity of speaking to his old friend about Ursule's future.

The doctor put a black velvet cap over his white head, the justice of the peace kept on his hat to protect himself from the cold, and both walked up

and down the terrace discussing the means of securing for Ursule what her godfather wanted to give her. The justice of the peace knew Dionis's opinion upon the invalidity of any will made by the doctor in Ursule's favor, for Nemours was too much occupied about the Minoret inheritance for this question not to have been discussed between the lawyers of the town. Bongrand had decided that Ursule Mirouët was a stranger with regard to Doctor Minoret, but he felt that the spirit of the law repulsed any illegitimate offshoots from the family. The authors of the Code had only foreseen the weakness of fathers and mothers for the natural children, without imagining that the uncles or the aunts might espouse the tenderness of the natural child in favor of its descendants. There was evidently something wanting in the law.

"In any other country," he said to the doctor at the conclusion of his explanation of the state of the law that Goupil, Dionis, and Désiré had just explained to the heirs, "Ursule would have nothing to fear; she is a legitimate daughter, and her father's incapacity ought only to operate in regard to the inheritance of Valentin-Mirouët, your father-in-law; but, in France, the magistracy is unfortunately very ingenious and consistent, it seeks the spirit of the law. The lawyers would talk morality and prove that the void in the Code arose from the simplicity of the legislators who had not foreseen the case, but who had none the less established a principle. The suit would be long and expensive. With Zélie,

they would go as far as the Court of Appeal, and I would not be sure of being still alive when this suit came on."

"The best of lawsuits is no longer good for anything," cried the doctor, "I also see the memorandum on this question: *To what extent should the incapacity be carried which, in the matter of inheritance, strikes natural children?* and a good lawyer's pride consists in winning desperate cases."

"Faith!" said Bongrand, "I would not dare undertake to affirm that the magistrates would not extend the interpretation of the law so as to extend the protection granted to marriage, the eternal foundation of all society."

Without declaring his intentions, the old man rejected the legacy trust. But, as to the question of a marriage that Bongrand suggested to him as a means of securing his fortune for Ursule:

"Poor little girl!" cried the doctor, "I am capable of living another fifteen years, what would become of her?"

"Well then, what do you think of doing?" said Bongrand.

"We will think it over—I will see," replied the old doctor, evidently at a loss for an answer.

At that moment, Ursule came to inform the two friends that Dionis wished to speak to the doctor.

"Dionis already!" cried Minoret, looking at the justice of the peace. "Yes," he replied to Ursule, "let him come in."

"I'll wager my spectacles against a match, that

he is the screen of your heirs; they have all been breakfasting at the post-house with Dionis, they must have planned something."

The notary, conducted by Ursule, came to the bottom of the garden. After the greetings and several trifling sentences, Dionis was granted a moment's private hearing. Ursule and Bongrand retired to the salon.

"We will think it over! I will see!" said Bongrand to himself, repeating the doctor's last words, "that is what clever people always say; death overtakes them and they leave the beings who are dear to them, in distress."

The mistrust that highly gifted men inspire in business men is extraordinary; they will not trust them in the *least* while recognizing them in the *greatest* affairs. But perhaps this mistrust is an encomium. Seeing them dwelling at the summit of human affairs, business people do not believe superior men capable of descending to the infinite littlenesses of the details which, like the interests in finance and the microscopics in natural science, end by equalizing capital and forming worlds. Mistaken fallacy! A man of good feeling and a man of genius see everything. Bongrand, nettled at the doctor's silence, but moved doubtless through interest in Ursule and believing her to be imperiled, resolved to defend her against the heirs. He was frantic at the thought of knowing nothing of the old man's conversation with Dionis.

"However pure Ursule may be," he thought,

whilst examining her, "there is a point at which young girls usually take the law and morality upon themselves. Let us try!—The Minoret-Levraults," he said to Ursule, securing his spectacles, "are likely to ask your hand in marriage for their son."

The poor little thing turned pale; she was too well brought up, and had too saintly a delicacy to go and listen to what was being said by Dionis and her uncle; but, after some brief inward deliberation, she thought she might show herself, reflecting that if she were not wanted her godfather would let her feel it. The outer blinds of the French window of the doctor's study in the Chinese pavilion were open. Ursule contrived an excuse for going to shut them up herself. She apologized for leaving the justice of the peace alone in the salon, and he said to her, smiling:

"Do it, do it."

Ursule gained the flight of steps leading down from the Chinese pavilion to the garden, and stood there several minutes, slowly arranging the blinds and looking at the setting sun. She then heard the following reply made by the doctor, who was coming towards the Chinese pavilion:

"My heirs would be delighted to see me investing in landed property and mortgages; they fancy that my fortune would be much more secure; I can guess all they say to each other, and perhaps you come from them—Know, my dear sir, that my arrangements are irrevocable. My heirs will have the capital of the fortune that I brought here, let them take

this as a warning and leave me in peace. If any one of them were to meddle in any way with what I consider I ought to do for this child"—he pointed to his godchild—"I would return from the next world to torment him! And so Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère may indeed remain in prison if anyone reckons upon me to get him out," added the doctor. "I will never sell my stock."

Upon hearing this last fragment of the sentence, Ursule experienced the first and only sorrow which had ever overtaken her; she leant her forehead against the blind and clung to it for support.

"Mon Dieu! what is the matter with her?" cried the old doctor, "she is quite white! Such a disturbance after dinner might kill her!"

He stretched out his arm to catch Ursule, who fell almost fainting.

"Good-bye, sir, leave me," he said to the notary.

He carried his goddaughter to an immense armchair of the time of Louis XV., which was in his study, seized a bottle of ether from his dispensary and made her inhale it.

"Take my place, my friend," he said to the terrified Bongrand, "I want to be alone with her."

The justice of the peace escorted the notary as far as the gate, asking him without any show of eagerness:

"What happened to Ursule?"

"I do not know," replied Monsieur Dionis, "she was on the steps listening to us; and, when *her uncle* refused to lend the sum necessary to young

Portenduère, who is in prison for debt, for he did not have, like Monsieur du Rouvre, a Monsieur Bongrand to defend him, she grew pale, staggered—Could she be in love with him? Might there be between them—?"

"At fifteen?" rejoined Bongrand, interrupting Dionis.

"She was born in February, 1814, she will be sixteen years old in four months."

"She has never seen her neighbor," replied the justice of the peace. "No, it was an attack."

"A heart attack," answered the notary.

The notary was delighted enough at this discovery, which might prevent the dreaded marriage *in extremis* with which the doctor could balk his heirs, whilst Bongrand saw his castles in the air overthrown; for a long time, he had been thinking of marrying his son to Ursule.

"If the poor child were in love with this fellow, it would be a misfortune for her; Madame de Portenduère is a Breton and biased as to her nobility," returned the justice of the peace after a pause.

"Happily—for the honor of the Portenduères," replied the notary, who was near betraying himself.

Let us do the good honest justice of the peace the justice of saying that whilst coming from the gate to the salon he abandoned, not without pity for his son, the hope he had fostered of one day calling Ursule his daughter. He reckoned on giving his son six thousand francs income upon the day when he should be appointed deputy; and, if

the doctor would have given Ursule a dowry of one hundred thousand francs, these two young people ought to have made the best of households; his Eugène was a loyal and charming fellow. Perhaps he had boasted too much about this Eugène, and perhaps old Minoret's distrust came from that.

"I shall fall back upon the mayor's daughter," thought Bongrand, "but Ursule without a dowry is worth more than Mademoiselle Levrault-Crémière with her million. Now, we must manœuvre so as to bring about Ursule's marriage with this young Portenduère, if however, she loves him."

After having shut the door on the side of the library and the garden door, the doctor led his ward to the window looking out upon the water's edge.

"What is the matter with you, cruel child?" he said to her, "your life is my life. What would become of me without your smile?"

"Savinien in prison!" she replied.

After these words, a torrent of tears fell from her eyes and the sobs came.

"She is saved!" thought the old man, who was feeling her pulse with a father's anxiety. "Alas! she has all my poor wife's sensitiveness," he said to himself whilst going to fetch a stethoscope which he placed on Ursule's heart while applying his ear to it.

"Come, all goes well," he said to himself.—"I did not know, my dearest, that you already loved him so much," he resumed, looking at her. "But think of me as if it were yourself, and tell me all that has passed between you."

"I do not love him, godfather, we have never spoken to each other," she replied, sobbing. "But to hear that this poor young man is in prison, and to know that you harshly refuse to get him out, you who are so good!"

"Ursule, my good little angel, if you do not love him, why do you put a red dot before the day of Saint-Savinien as well as before the day of Saint-Denis? Come now, tell me the minutest incidents of this love affair."

Ursule reddened, restrained her tears, and there was a moment's silence between her and her uncle.

"Are you afraid of your father, your friend, your mother, your physician, your godfather, whose heart has for several days been made more tender than it was before—?"

"Well then, dear godfather," she rejoined, "I will open my soul to you. In the month of May, Monsieur Savinien came to see his mother. Up till that journey, I had never paid him the least attention. When he left to live in Paris, I was a child, and I swear to you, I could see no difference between a young man and such as you, unless it were that I loved you, without dreaming that I could possibly love anybody better. Monsieur Savinien arrived by the mail-coach on the eve of his mother's birthday, without our knowledge. At seven in the morning, after having said my prayers, whilst opening the window to air my room, I saw the windows of Monsieur Savinien's room open, and Monsieur Savinien in his dressing-gown, busy shaving, and putting a

grace into his movements—well, I thought him handsome. He combed his black moustache, the point under his chin, and I saw his white, round neck—Must I tell you everything?—I noticed that this fresh neck, this face and this beautiful black hair were very different from yours, when I used to see you shaving. A surging vapor, from where I do not know, rose in my heart, in my throat, in my head, and so violently that I sat down. I could not stand upright, I trembled. But I so much wanted to see him, that I stood on tiptoe; he then saw me, and, in fun, sent me a kiss with the tips of his fingers, and—"

"And—?"

"And," she resumed, "I hid myself, as much ashamed as I was happy, without being able to account for my shame in this happiness. This movement, which intoxicated my soul whilst causing I know not what power, is renewed every time that I see this young face again in my mind's eye. At last I used to delight in recognizing this emotion, however violent it might be. Whilst going to mass, an unconquerable force urged me to look at Monsieur Savinien giving his arm to his mother; his bearing, his clothes, everything, even to the sound of his boots on the pavement, seemed to me desirable. The least thing about him, his hand, so delicately gloved, influenced me like a spell. Nevertheless, I had the strength not to think of him during mass. At the end of the service, I remained in the church in such a way as to allow Madame de Portenduère

to leave first, and thus to walk after him. I could not convey to you how much these little arrangements interested me. Upon coming in, when I turned round to shut the gate—"

"And La Bougival?" said the doctor.

"Oh! I let her go to her kitchen," said Ursule naively. "So I could then of course see Monsieur Savinien standing firmly looking at me. Oh! godfather, I felt so proud at fancying I could see a sort of surprise and admiration in his eyes, that I do not know what I would not have done to afford him the opportunity of looking at me. It seemed to me that I ought not in future to do anything but please him. His glance is now the sweetest reward for my good actions. From that moment, I think of him ceaselessly and in spite of myself. Monsieur Savinien left again that evening, I have not seen him since, the Rue des Bourgeois has seemed empty to me, and he has, as it were, carried away my heart with him, without knowing it."

"Is that all?" said the doctor.

"All, godfather," she said, with a sigh in which the regret at not having more to tell was stifled under the sorrow of the moment.

"My dear little one," said the doctor, seating Ursule on his knees, "you will soon be sixteen, and your life as a woman will begin. You are between your blessed childhood, which ceases, and the agitations of love, which will make your existence a stormy one, for you have the nervous system belonging to an exquisite sensitiveness. What has

come to you, is love, my child," said the old man, with an expression of profound sadness, "it is love in its sacred simplicity, love as it should be; involuntary, swift, come as a thief who takes all—yes, all! And I expected it. I have studied women well, and know that, if love only masters most of them after many proofs and miracles of affection, if those women never break their silence and only yield when conquered, there are others who, under the influence of a sympathy which is accounted for nowadays by magnetic fluids, are overcome in an instant. I can tell you this to-day; as soon as I saw the charming woman who bore your name, I felt that I should love her solely and faithfully, without knowing if our characters or our persons would agree. Has love got second sight? What answer can one give, after having seen so many unions celebrated under the auspices of so heavenly a contract, broken later on, engendering almost eternal hatred, and positive repulsion? The senses can, so to speak, mutually correspond and the ideas be at variance: and perhaps some people live more through ideas than through the feelings. On the other hand, characters often agree and the persons dislike each other. These two utterly different phenomena, which would account for many misfortunes, prove the wisdom of the laws which allow the parents the upper hand in the marriages of their children; for a young girl is often the dupe of one of these two hallucinations. Therefore I do not blame you. The sensations that you experience,

this movement of your sensibility which rushes from its yet unknown centre over your heart and mind, this happiness with which you think of Savinien, all is natural. But, my adored child, as our good Abbé Chaperon has told you, society demands the sacrifice of many natural inclinations. The destinies of men are different from those of women. I was able to choose Ursule Mirouët for my wife and go to her telling her how much I loved her; whilst a young girl belies her virtues by soliciting the love of the man she loves: the woman has not, like us, the means of pursuing in broad daylight the accomplishment of her desires. Besides, with her, with you all, and particularly with you, modesty is the insuperable barrier which guards the secrets of your heart. Your hesitation in confiding your first emotions to me is enough to tell me that you would endure the most cruel tortures rather than confess to Savinien—"

"Oh! yes!" she said.

"But, my child, you ought to do more; you ought to repress the impulses of your heart, and forget them."

"Why?"

"Because, my little angel, you ought to love none but the man who is to be your husband; and, even if Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère loved you—"

"I have not yet thought of that."

"Listen to me—even if he love you, and his mother were to ask me for your hand, I would not consent to this marriage until I had submitted

Savinien to a long and mature examination. His conduct has just made him suspected by all families, and placed between him and any heiress barriers which will be overcome with difficulty."

A divine smile dried Ursule's tears and she said:

"In some circumstances misfortune is a good thing!"

The doctor could not answer this simplicity.

"What has he done, godfather?" she resumed.

"In two years, my little angel, he has contracted one hundred and twenty thousand francs' worth of debts in Paris! He was foolish enough to allow himself to be put in Sainte-Pélagie, a blunder which, as times go, brings a young man into disrepute forever. A spendthrift who is capable of plunging a poor mother into sorrow and want, would kill his wife from despair as your poor father did."

"Do you think he could reform?" she asked.

"If his mother pays for him, he would be reduced to beggary, and I know no worse correction for a nobleman than to be without money."

This answer made Ursule thoughtful; she dried her tears and said to her godfather:

"If you can, do save him, godfather; this service would give you the right to advise him; you would remonstrate with him—"

"And," said the doctor, imitating Ursule's way of speaking, "he could come here, the old lady would come here, we should see them, and—"

"I was only thinking of him just then," replied Ursule, blushing.

"Do not think of him any more, my poor child; it is folly!" said the doctor, gravely. "Madame de Portenduère, a Kergarouët, had she only three hundred francs a year to live on, would never consent to the marriage of the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère, grand-nephew of the late Comte de Portenduère, lieutenant-general of the King's navy and son of the Vicomte de Portenduère, post-captain, with whom? with Ursule Mirouët, daughter of a bandmaster in a regiment, without fortune, and whose father, alas! now is the moment to tell you, was the bastard of an organist, my father-in-law."

"Oh! godfather, you are right; we are only equal before God. I will never think of him again but in my prayers!" she said between the sobs excited by this disclosure. "Give him all that you destine for me. What can a poor girl like myself want?—In prison, he!"

"Present all your sorrows to God, and perhaps He will come to our aid."

Silence reigned for several moments. When Ursule, who had not dared look at her godfather, raised her eyes to his, her heart was deeply touched at seeing the tears rolling down his withered cheeks. Old men's tears are as alarming as children's are natural.

"Mon Dieu! What is the matter?" she said, throwing herself at his feet and kissing his hands. "Are you not sure about me?"

"I, who long to satisfy all your wishes, am obliged to cause you the first great sorrow of your

life! I suffer as much as you do. I never wept except at my children's and Ursule's death—Here, I will do anything you wish!" he cried.

Through her tears, Ursule gave her godfather a look that was like a flash; she smiled.

"Let us go to the salon, and contrive to keep all this to yourself, my little one," said the doctor, leaving his goddaughter in his study.

This father felt himself so weak before this divine smile, that he was almost on the point of saying a word of hope and so misleading his goddaughter.

*

At that moment, Madame de Portenduère, alone with the curé in her cold little parlor on the ground floor, had just finished confiding her troubles to this good priest, her only friend. In her hand she held the letters that the Abbé Chaperon had just returned to her after having read them, and which had completed the measure of her worries. Sitting in her easy-chair on one side of the square table covered with the remains of dessert, the old lady looked at the curé, who, on the other side, huddled in his armchair, was stroking his chin with the gesture common to theatrical valets, mathematicians and priests, and which betrays some reflection over a difficult problem.

This little parlor, lighted by two windows facing the road and wainscoted with gray painted woodwork, was so damp, that the lower panels showed the geometrical cracks of rotten wood when it is no longer preserved but by paint. The tiled floor, red and rubbed by the old lady's only servant, required little rounds of matting in front of each seat, upon one of which the abbé was keeping his feet. The curtains, of old, light-green damask with green flowers, were drawn, and the outer blinds had been shut. Two candles lit up the table, leaving the room in shadow. Is it necessary to say that between the two windows was a fine pastel by Latour of the

famous Admiral de Portenduère, the rival of the Suffrens, the Kergarouëts, the Guichens and the Simeuses? On the paneling, opposite the fireplace, could be seen the Vicomte de Portenduère, and the old lady's mother, a Kergarouët-Ploëgat. And so Savinien's great-uncle was the Vice-admiral Kergarouët, and his cousin the Comte de Portenduère, the admiral's grandson, both of them very rich. The Vice-admiral de Kergarouët lived in Paris, and the Comte de Portenduère at the castle of that name in the Dauphiné. His cousin the count represented the elder branch, and Savinien was the only offspring of the younger De Portenduère. The count, past forty years of age, and married to a rich woman, had three children. His fortune, accruing from several legacies, amounted—so it was said—to sixty thousand francs income. Deputy of L'Isère, he passed his winters in Paris, where he had bought back the De Portenduère mansion with the indemnities brought him by the Villèle law. The Vice-admiral de Kergarouët had recently married his niece, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, solely in order to secure her his fortune. And so the viscount's shortcomings were to lose him two powerful protectors. If Savinien, a young and handsome fellow, had entered the navy, with his name and backed by an admiral and a deputy, he might perhaps at twenty-three have already been a lieutenant; but his mother, objecting to her only son being destined for a military career, had had him educated at Nemours by one of the Abbé Chaperon's curates,

and had flattered herself that she would be able to keep her son beside her until her death. She sensibly wished to marry him to a Demoiselle d'Aiglemont, worth twelve thousand francs a year, to whose hand the name of De Portenduère and the farm of the Bordières made it possible to aspire. This restricted but prudent scheme, which might restore the family to the second generation, was to be defeated by events. The D'Aiglemonts then became ruined, and one of their daughters, the eldest, Hélène, disappeared without the family giving any explanation of this mystery. The tedium of a life without freedom, outlet or action, with no other food than filial love, so wearied Savinien, that he burst his bonds, however gentle they might be, and swore never to live in a province, understanding, somewhat late, that his future was not limited to the Rue des Bourgeois. And so at twenty-one he had left his mother to make the acquaintance of his relations and try his luck in Paris. To a young man of twenty-one, free, unopposed, necessarily eager for pleasure and to whose name of De Portenduère and rich kindred all fashionable circles were open, the life of Nemours and the life of Paris were bound to form a fatal contrast. Certain that his mother was keeping the savings of twenty years hoarded in some hiding-place, Savinien soon spent the six thousand francs she had given him with which to see Paris. This sum did not defray the expenses of his first six months, and then he owed double that amount to his hotel, his

tailor, his bootmaker, his livery-stable keeper, to a jeweler, and to all the tradesmen who contribute to the luxury of young men. He had hardly succeeded in becoming known, hardly learnt how to talk, to make calls, to wear his waistcoats and choose them, to order his clothes and to put on a tie, when he found himself at the head of thirty thousand francs' worth of debt and knowing no better than to seek a delicate turn of expression in which to declare his love to the sister of the Marquis de Ronquerolles, Madame de Sérizy, a fashionable woman, but whose youth had bloomed under the Empire.

"How did you others extricate yourselves?" said Savinien one day, at the end of a breakfast, to a few dandies with whom he had formed a connection, as nowadays young men form connections whose affectations in everything aim at the same goal and who lay claim to an impossible equality.

"You were no richer than I, you go along without anxiety, you keep up your positions, and I, I already have debts!"

"We all began that way," laughed Rastignac, Lucien de Rubempré, Maxime de Trailles, and Émile Blondet, the dandies of the day.

"If De Marsay happened to be rich at the outset of life, it was an accident!" said the host, a parvenu called Finot, who was trying to associate with these young men. "And had he not been himself," he added, bowing to him, "his fortune might be the undoing of him."

"You have hit upon the right expression," said Maxime de Trailles.

"And the right idea too," rejoined Rastignac.

"My dear fellow," said De Marsay gravely, to Savinien, "debts are the silent partners of experience. A good University education with masters for accomplishments and for uninviting utilities, who teach you nothing, costs sixty thousand francs. If the world's education costs double that, it teaches you life, business, politics, men, and sometimes, women."

Blondet concluded this lesson with this translation of a verse from La Fontaine:

"The world sells dearly what one thinks it gives!"

Instead of pondering over the sense of what was told him by the most skilful pilots of the Parisian archipelago, Savinien merely took it as a joke.

"Take care, my dear fellow," said De Marsay, "you have a good name, and if you do not get the good luck required by your name, you may end your days in the garb of a quarter-master in a cavalry regiment—

"Nobler heads have we seen fall!"

he added, spouting this verse by Corneille and taking Savinien's arm—"Nearly six years ago," he resumed, "a young Comte d'Esgrignon came amongst us, who did not live more than two years in the paradise of high life! Alas! he lived the life

of a rocket. He soared as high as to the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and he relapsed into his native town, where he atones for his trespasses between an old catarrhal father and a game of whist at two-penny points. Tell Madame de Sérizy your position quite simply, without shame; she would be very useful to you; whilst, if you play the charade of a first love with her, she will pose as a Raphael Madonna, play at forfeits and make you journey at great expense into the Land of Love."

Savinien, still too young, and out of sheer gentlemanly honor, did not dare confess his financial position to Madame de Sérizy. Madame de Portenduère, just when her son did not know which way to turn, sent twenty thousand francs—all that she possessed—in consequence of a letter in which Savinien, initiated by his friends into the ballistics of the wiles directed by children against the paternal strong-box, spoke of bills to be paid and of the disgrace of allowing his signature to be protested. With this assistance he reached the end of the first year. The second year, still bound to the chariot wheels of Madame de Sérizy, who was seriously in love with him and who also improved him, he availed himself of the dangerous aid of usurers. A deputy among his friends, a friend of his cousin De Portenduère, Des Lupeaulx, directed him, one day of distress, to Gobseck, to Gigonnet and to Palma, who, rightly and duly informed of the value of his mother's property, gave him delightfully easy discount. The usurer and the delusive help of

renewals made his life happy for about eighteen months. Without daring to forsake Madame de Sérizy, the poor boy fell madly in love with the beautiful Comtesse de Kergarouët, prudish like all young women who are waiting for the death of an old husband, and who skilfully preserve their virtue for a second marriage. Incapable of understanding that a calculated virtue is unconquerable, Savinien continued paying his court to Émilie de Kergarouët with the full appearance of a rich man; he never missed a ball or a play at which she happened to be.

"My dear fellow, you have not got enough powder with which to blow up that rock," said De Marsay to him one evening, laughing.

In vain this young king of Paris fashion, out of pity, tried to explain Émilie de Fontaine to this boy; it needed the dismal enlightenment of misery and the darkness of a prison to open Savinien's eyes. A bill of exchange, rashly signed for a jeweler, in league with the usurers who did not want to have the odium of the arrest, caused Savinien de Portenduère, unknown to his friends, to be imprisoned at Sainte-Pélagie for the sum of one hundred and seventeen thousand francs. As soon as Rastignac, De Marsay and Lucien de Rubempré heard this news, all three came to see Savinien and finding him stripped of everything, each one offered him a bill for one thousand francs. The valet, bribed by two creditors, had told of the secret apartment where Savinien lodged, and everything had

been seized, except the clothes and the little jewelry that he was wearing. The three young men, provided with an excellent dinner, and whilst drinking the sherry brought by De Marsay, enquired into Savinien's situation, apparently in order to organize his future, but doubtless in order to try him.

"When one is called Savinien de Portenduère," cried Rastignac, "when one has a future peer of France for a cousin, and the Admiral de Kergarouët for a great-uncle, if one commits the huge mistake of allowing one's self to be put in Sainte-Pélagie, one must not stay there, my dear fellow!"

"Why did you tell me nothing of all this?" cried De Marsay, "you had my traveling carriage, ten thousand francs and letters for Germany at your disposal. We know Gobseck, Gigonnet and other crocodiles, we would have made them come to terms. And in the first place, who was the ass who led you to drink at this deadly source?" asked De Marsay.

"Des Lupeaulx."

The three young men looked at each other, thus exchanging the same thought, a suspicion, but without uttering it.

"Explain your resources to me, show me your hand?" asked De Marsay.

When Savinien had described his mother and her bow-trimmed caps, her little house with its three windows facing the Rue des Bourgeois, with no other garden than a yard with a well and a shed for storing the wood; when he had counted up the value of

this house, built of sandstone, rough-cast in reddish mortar, and had appreciated the Bordières farm, the three dandies looked at each other and feelingly quoted the saying of the abbé in the *Marrons du Feu*, by Alfred de Musset, whose *Contes d'Espagne* had just then appeared:

"Sad!"

"Your mother would pay on receipt of a cleverly written letter," said Rastignac.

"Yes, and then—?" cried De Marsay.

"Had you only been put into a cab," said Lucien, "the King's government would have procured you a position in diplomacy; but Sainte-Pélagie is not the anteroom of an embassy."

"You are not strong enough for Paris life," said Rastignac.

"Let's see!" rejoined De Marsay, measuring Savinien as a dealer rates a horse, "you have beautiful, well-formed blue eyes, you have a white, well-cut forehead, magnificent black hair, a small moustache which looks well against your pale cheeks, and a slender figure; you have a foot which indicates breeding, shoulders and chest that are not too much like a porter's and are yet solid. You are what I call an elegant dark man. Your face is of the Louis XIII. style, with little color, and a nicely shaped nose; and you have besides, that which pleases women, a something indefinable that men themselves do not understand and which is in the appearance, the bearing, the sound of the voice, in the darting of the glance, in the gestures, a host of little things

that women see and to which they attach a certain meaning which escapes us. You do not know yourself, my dear fellow. With a little steadiness, in six months you would bewitch an Englishwoman with a hundred thousand francs, especially by taking the title of Vicomte de Portenduère to which you have a right. My charming mother-in-law, Lady Dudley, who is without her match in impaling two hearts, will discover her for you in some one of the alluvial grounds of Great Britain. But you must be able and know how to carry over your debts for ninety days by some deft manœuvre of financial policy. Why did you keep it from me? At Baden, the usurers would have respected you, and perhaps have served you; but, after having put you in prison they despise you. The usurer is like society, like the people, on his knees before a man who is strong enough to laugh at him, and pitiless toward the lambs. In the eyes of certain people, Sainte-Pélagie is a she-devil who madly scorches young men's souls. Do you want my advice, my dear boy? I should say to you as to little D'Esgrignon: 'Pay your debts with caution, keeping enough to live upon for three years, and marry in the provinces the first girl who may have thirty thousand francs income. In three years, you will have found some sensible heiress who wants to call herself Madame de Portenduère.' This is wisdom. So let us drink. I propose this toast: 'To the girl with cash!' "

The young men did not leave their ex-friend until

the official hour for leave-taking, and on the door-step they said to each other:

"He is not strong!" "He is very much downcast!" "Will he get over it?"

The next day, Savinien wrote his mother a general confession of twenty-two pages. After having wept for a whole day, Madame de Portenduère first wrote to her son, promising to get him out of prison: then to the Comtes de Portenduère and De Kergarouët.

The letters that the curé had just been reading and that the poor mother was holding in her hands, wet with tears, had arrived that same morning and had broken her heart.

TO MADAME DE PORTENDUÈRE.

"Paris, September, 1829.

"MADAME,

"You cannot doubt the interest the admiral and I take in your troubles. What you write to Monsieur de Kergarouët grieves me all the more as my house was your son's; we were proud of him. If Savinien had had more confidence in the admiral we would have taken him with us, and he would already have been suitably placed; but he said nothing to us, the unhappy boy! The admiral could not pay a hundred thousand francs; he is in debt himself and has involved himself for me who knew nothing of his pecuniary position. He is all the more grieved in that Savinien has, for the moment, tied our hands by allowing himself to be arrested. If my handsome nephew had not had I cannot say how foolish a passion for me which stifled the voice of the kinship in the pride of the lover, we would have made him travel in Germany whilst his affairs were being settled here. Monsieur de Kergarouët

would have been able to ask for a post in the naval offices for his grand-nephew; but an imprisonment for debt will doubtless paralyze the admiral's applications. Pay Savinien's debts, let him serve in the navy—he will make his way like a true Portenduerè—he has their fire in his beautiful black eyes—and we will all help him.

"So do not despair, madame; you still have friends, amongst whom I wish to be included as one of the most sincere, and I send all wishes with the respects of

"Your very affectionate servant,

"ÉMILIE DE KERGAROUËT."

TO MADAME DE PORTENDUÈRE.

"Portenduère, August, 1829.

"MY DEAR AUNT,

"I am as much vexed as distressed at Savinien's escapades. Married, the father of two sons and a daughter, my fortune, already so slender relatively to my position and prospects, does not permit me to diminish it by a sum of one hundred thousand francs to pay the ransom of a Portenduère whom the money-lenders have seized. Sell your farm, pay his debts and come to Portenduère; you will there find the welcome we owe you, even were our hearts not wholly yours. You will live happily, and we will end by marrying Savinien, whom my wife thinks charming. This prank is nothing, do not be unhappy, it will never be known in our province, where we know several very rich girls who would be delighted to belong to us.

"My wife joins with me in telling you of the pleasure you would give us, and begs you will accept her wishes for the realization of this project and the assurance of our affectionate respects.

"LUC-SAVINIEN COMTE DE PORTENDUÈRE."

"What letters for a Kergarouët!" cried the old Bretonne, wiping her eyes.

"The admiral does not know that his nephew is

in prison," finally said the Abbé Chaperon, "only the countess has read your letter, and she has answered it. But it is necessary to come to some decision," he continued after a pause, "and this is what I have the honor of advising you to do. Do not sell your farm. The lease is up, and it has lasted now for twenty-four years; in a few months, you will be able to raise the rent to six thousand francs, and have a bonus equal to two years' rent. Borrow from an honest man, and not from the men of the town who trade in mortgages. Your neighbor is a worthy man, a man of good society, who was in the fashionable world before the Revolution, and who from atheism has turned to Catholicism. Do not feel any reluctance in coming to see him this evening, he would be much affected by your step; forget for a moment that you are a Kergarouët."

"Never!" said the aged mother in a harsh voice.

"Well then, be an amiable Kergarouët; come when he is alone, he will only lend at three and a half, perhaps at three per cent, and will do you service with delicacy, you will be pleased; he himself will go to deliver Savinien, for he would be obliged to sell some stock, and he will bring him back to you."

"Are you then speaking of that little Minoret?"

"That little one is eighty-three years old," replied the Abbé Chaperon, smiling. "My dear lady, have a little Christian charity, do not wound him, he may be useful to you in more ways than one."

"And how?"

"But he has an angel beside him, the most heavenly young girl—"

"Yes, that little Ursule—Well, and then?"

The poor curé dared not continue upon hearing that "Well,—and then?" the dryness and asperity of which decided beforehand the proposition that he wished to make.

"I believe doctor Minoret to be extremely rich—"

"All the better for him."

"You have very indirectly caused your son's present misfortunes by not giving him any career, take care of the future!" said the curé severely. "Am I to announce your visit to your neighbor?"

"But why, knowing that I want him, should he not come here?"

"Ah! madame! by going to him, you will pay three per cent, and, if he comes to you, you will pay five," said the curé, who hit upon this good reason in order to decide the old lady, "and, if you were forced to sell your farm through Dionis the notary, or through Massin the clerk, who would refuse you cash in the hope of profiting by your misfortune, you would lose half the value of the Bordières. I have not the least influence over the Dionis, the Massins, and the Levraults, rich men of the district who covet your farm and know that your son is in prison."

"They know it! they know it!" she cried, raising her arms.—"Oh! my poor curé, you have let your coffee grow cold—Tiennette! Tiennette!"

Tiennette, an old Bretonne in a Breton jacket and

cap, about sixty years old, entered briskly and took the curé's coffee to heat it.

"Stay quiet, Monsieur le Recteur," she said, seeing that the curé wanted to drink it, "I will put it into hot water, it will not get nasty."

"Well," resumed the curé with his insinuating voice, "I will go and warn Monsieur le Docteur of your visit, and you will come."

The old mother only yielded after an hour's discussion, in which the curé was obliged to repeat his arguments ten times over. And even then the haughty Kergarouët was only conquered by these parting words:

"Savinien would go!"

"Then it is better that I go," she said.

*

Nine o'clock was striking when the little door contrived within the large one closed upon the curé, who eagerly rang at the doctor's gate. From Tiennette the Abbé Chaperon fell into the hands of La Bougival, for the old nurse said:

"You are very late, Monsieur le Curé!" just as the other had said: "Why do you leave madame so early when she is in trouble?"

The curé found a large party in the doctor's green and brown salon, for Dionis had been to reassure the heirs, by calling on Massin to repeat his uncle's words to him.

"I think," he said, "that Ursule has a love in her heart which will give her nothing but sorrow and anxiety; she seems to be romantic—thus do notaries term excessive sensitiveness,—and we shall see her long remain single. Therefore, no suspicion; show her particular attention, and be your uncle's servants, for he is more cunning than a hundred Goupils," added the notary, not knowing that Goupil is a corruption of the latin word, *vulpes*, a fox.

And so, Mesdames Massin and Crémière, their husbands, the postmaster and Désiré formed, with the Nemours doctor and Bongrand, a noisy and unwonted company at the doctor's house. As

he came in the Abbé Chaperon heard the sound of the piano. Poor Ursule was finishing Beethoven's symphony in *A*.

With the craftiness that innocence is allowed, the child, whom her godfather had enlightened and who disliked the heirs, chose this grand music which has to be studied to be understood, so as to put these women out of conceit with their fancy. The more beautiful music is, the less ignorant people enjoy it. And so, when the door opened and the Abbé Chaperon showed his venerable head the heirs cried: "Ah! here is Monsieur le Curé!" all delighted at being able to get up and put an end to their torture.

The exclamation found an echo at the card-table, where Bongrand, the Nemours doctor and the old man were victims of the presumption with which the tax-collector, in order to please his great-uncle, had proposed himself as a fourth at whist. Ursule left the piano. The doctor rose as if to greet the curé, but really to put a stop to the game. After greatly complimenting their uncle upon his god-daughter's talent, the heirs made their bows.

"Good-night, my friends," cried the doctor when the iron gate resounded.

"Ah! is that what costs so dear?" said Madame Crémière to Madame Massin when they had gone a few steps.

"Heaven defend me from giving the money for my little Aline to treat me to such a clatter in the house!" replied Madame Massin.

"She said that it was by *Bethovan* who is supposed to be a great musician," said the tax-collector, "he has some reputation."

"Upon my faith! it is not at Nemours then," rejoined Madame Crémière, "and he is well named *Bête à vent.*"

"I believe that our uncle did it on purpose so that we should not go there again," said Massin, "for he winked at his conceited creature as he showed the green volume."

"If they amuse themselves with that racket," returned the postmaster, "they do well to stay by themselves."

"The justice of the peace must be very fond of playing to listen to those *Sonacles*," said Madame Crémière.

"I shall never be able to play before people who do not understand music," said Ursule, going and sitting beside the card-table.

"Ideas, with richly organized people, can only develop in a favorable sphere," said the curé of Nemours. "In the same way as a priest could not bless in the presence of an evil spirit, as the chestnut dies in rich ground, so a musical genius experiences an inward defeat when he is surrounded by ignorant persons. In all the arts we must receive, from the souls that serve as a medium to our souls, as much strength as we impart to them. This axiom which governs human affections has prompted the proverbs: 'One must do as others do;' 'Birds of a feather flock together.' But the

suffering that you must have endured only overtakes tender, delicate natures."

"Therefore, my friends," said the doctor, "a thing that would merely pain any other woman might kill my little Ursule. Ah! when I am no more, raise that protecting hedge between this dear flower and the world which is spoken of in Catullus' verse: *Ut flos*, etc."

"And yet these ladies were very flattering to you, Ursule," said the justice of the peace, smiling.

"Coarsely flattering," observed the Nemours doctor.

"I have always remarked coarseness in flattery made to order," replied old Minoret, "and why?"

"A genuine thought bears its own delicacy," said the abbé.

"You dined with Madame de Portenduère?" then said Ursule, questioning the Abbé Chaperon with a look full of anxious curiosity.

"Yes, the poor lady is much distressed, and it is possible that she may come to see you to-night, Monsieur Minoret."

"If she is in trouble and has need of me, I will call upon her," cried the doctor, "let us finish the last rubber."

Under the table Ursule squeezed the old man's hand.

"Her son," said the justice of the peace, "was a little too simple to live in Paris without a mentor. When I knew that enquiries were being made at

the notary's about the old lady's farm, I guessed that he was discounting his mother's death."

"Do you believe him capable of it?" said Ursule, darting a terrible look at Monsieur Bongrand, who said to himself: "Alas! yes! she loves him."

"Yes and no," said the Nemours doctor, "Savinien has good in him and that is why he is in prison; rascals never go there."

"My friends," cried old Minoret, "this is quite enough for to-night; one must not allow a poor mother to weep a moment longer, when one can dry her tears."

The four friends rose and went out. Ursule accompanied them as far as the iron gate, watching her godfather and the curé knocking at the opposite door; and, when Tiennette had shown them in, she sat down on one of the posts outside the house, with La Bougival beside her.

"Madame la Vicomtesse," said the curé, who was the first to enter the little parlor, "Monsieur le Docteur did not at all wish you to take the trouble to go to his house—"

"I belong too much to bygone days, madame," rejoined the doctor, "not to know all that a man owes to a lady of your rank, and I am only too happy, after what Monsieur le Curé has told me, to be able to render you some service."

Madame de Portenduère, upon whom the step agreed upon had weighed so heavily that, since the Abbé Chaperon's departure, she had resolved to apply to the Nemours notary, was so surprised at

Minoret's delicacy, that she rose to return his bow and pointed to an armchair.

"Sit down, monsieur," she said with a royal air, "our dear curé will have told you that the viscount is in prison for a few boyish debts, a hundred thousand francs—If you could lend them to him, I would give you as security my Bordières farm."

"We will talk of that, Madame la Vicomtesse, when I shall have restored monsieur your son to you, if you will allow me to be your agent in these circumstances."

"Very well, Monsieur le Docteur," replied the old lady, inclining her head, and looking at the curé as much as to say, "You are right, he is a man of good breeding."

"My friend the doctor," then said the curé, "is, as you see, madame, full of devotion to your family."

"We shall be very grateful to you, monsieur," said Madame de Portenduère, with visible effort, "for, at your age, to venture in Paris on the track of a giddy-brain's misdeeds—"

"Madame, in '65, I had the honor of seeing the illustrious Admiral de Portenduère at the house of that excellent Monsieur de Malesherbes, and at the house of Monsieur le Comte de Buffon, who wished to question him about several curious facts of his voyages. It is quite possible that the late Monsieur de Portenduère, your husband, may have been there. At that time the French navy was glorious, it was making head against England, and in this profession the captain contributed his share of courage.

How impatiently, in '83 and '84, did we wait for news of the camp of Saint-Roch! I all but went as doctor with the King's forces. At that time your great-uncle, the Admiral de Kergarouët who is still living, waged his famous battle, for he was on *La Belle Poule.*"

"Ah! if he knew that his grand-nephew were in prison!"

"Monsieur le Vicomte will not be there two days longer," said old Minoret, rising.

He put out his hand to take that of the old lady, who suffered him to do so, he deposited a respectful kiss upon it, made a low bow, and went out; but he returned to say to the curé: "My dear abbé, will you engage a seat for me in the diligence for to-morrow morning?"

The curé remained about half an hour singing the praises of Doctor Minoret, who had intended making a conquest of the old lady, and had succeeded.

"He is wonderful for his age," she said, "he talks of going to Paris and arranging my son's affairs as if he were only twenty-five years old. He has been in good society."

"The best, madame; and, nowadays, more than one son of a poor French peer would be glad to marry his ward, who is worth a million. Ah! if this idea entered Savinien's head, times are so changed, that the greatest objections would not be on your side after your son's behavior."

The profound astonishment that this last sentence caused the old lady permitted the curé to finish.

"You are out of your mind, my dear Abbé Chaperon."

"You must think of it, madame, and God grant that your son may in future so conduct himself as to win this old man's esteem!"

"If it were not you, Monsieur le Curé," said Madame de Portenduère, "if anybody else were to speak to me so—"

"You would not see him again," said the Abbé Chaperon, smiling. "Let us hope that your dear son will tell you what goes on in Paris in the way of marriages. You will think of Savinien's happiness, and, after having already compromised his future, will not prevent him from creating himself a position."

"And it is you who say this to me!"

"If I did not say it to you, who would?" cried the priest, rising and beating a hasty retreat.

The curé saw Ursule and her godfather walking round the courtyard. The tender-hearted doctor had been so much teased by his goddaughter that he had just yielded; she wanted to go to Paris and was giving him a thousand pretexts. He called the curé, who came, and the doctor begged him to retain all the front seats for him that same evening, if the diligence office were still open. The next day, at half-past six in the evening, the old man and the young girl arrived in Paris, where, that very evening, the doctor went to consult his notary. Political events were threatening. Several times the day before, whilst talking with the doctor, the justice of

the peace at Nemours had said that it was madness to keep one penny's income in stocks as long as the dispute that had arisen between the press and the Court was still undecided. Minoret's notary approved of the advice indirectly given by the justice of the peace. And so the doctor took advantage of his journey to realize his industrial shares and his stock, all of which happened to be rising, and to deposit his funds in the Bank. The notary also persuaded his old client to sell out the stock left to Ursule by Monsieur de Jordy, and which, like a good father of a family, he had turned to account. He promised to set an exceedingly crafty agent to deal with Savinien's creditors; but it was necessary, in order to succeed, that the young man should have the courage to remain a few days longer in prison.

"In this sort of business hurry costs at least fifteen per cent," said the notary to the doctor. "And, in the first place, you will not have your funds before seven or eight days."

When Ursule heard that Savinien would be at least a week longer in prison, she begged her guardian to let her accompany him for once. Old Minoret refused. The uncle and the niece were staying in a hotel in the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, where the doctor had taken the whole of a convenient suite; and, knowing his ward's conscientiousness, made her promise not to go out when he was gone about his business. The good old man took Ursule about Paris, and showed her the thoroughfares, the

shops and the boulevards; but nothing interested or amused her.

"What do you want to do?" said the old man.

"To see Sainte-Pélagie," she obstinately replied.

Then Minoret took a cab and drove her as far as the Rue de la Clef, where the carriage stopped in front of the ignoble façade of the former monastery, now transformed into a prison. The sight of these high, gray walls where all the windows were barred, and the wicket can only be entered by stooping—awful lesson!—this gloomy pile in a quarter full of misery where it stands up amidst deserted streets like a crowning misery: all these melancholy things overcame Ursule and made her weep a little.

"What!" she said, "are young men imprisoned for money? how can a debt give a money-lender even greater power than the king? And so *he* is there!" she cried, "and where, godfather?" she added, looking from window to window.

"Ursule," said the old man, "you make me play the fool. This is not forgetting him."

"But," she rejoined, "if I must give him up, may I not feel any interest in him? I can love him and marry nobody else."

"Ah!" cried the kind old man, "there is so much reason in your infatuation, that I am sorry I brought you here."

Three days later, the old man had the receipts in due form, the claims, and all the documents establishing Savinien's freedom. This settlement, including the agent's fees, had been effected for the

sum of eighty thousand francs. The doctor still had eight hundred thousand francs left, which his notary made him invest in Treasury bonds, in order not to lose too much interest. He was keeping twenty thousand francs in bank-notes for Savinien. The doctor went himself to secure his freedom on Saturday at two o'clock, and the young viscount, already informed by a letter from his mother, thanked his deliverer with sincere earnestness of heart.

"You must not delay in going to see your mother," said old Minoret.

Savinien in some confusion replied that he had contracted a debt of honor in prison, and related the visit of his friends.

"I thought you might have some privileged debt," cried the doctor, smiling, "your mother borrows one hundred thousand francs from me, but I have only paid ninety thousand; here is the remainder, be careful of it, monsieur, and consider what you keep of it as your stake on the green baize of Fortune."

During the last eight days, Savinien had been reflecting upon the present time. The competition in everything exacts great labor from the man who seeks a fortune. Unlawful means demand more talent and underhand dealings than an open quest. Worldly successes, far from giving any position, devour time and require an enormous amount of money. The name of Portenduère, which his mother had told him was all-powerful, was nothing in Paris. His cousin, the deputy, the Comte de

Portenduère, cut but a small figure in the midst of the elective Chamber in the presence of the peerage and the Court, and had none too much credit for himself. The Admiral de Kergarouët only existed through his wife. He had seen orators, men who had come from social surroundings inferior to the nobility or to the petty gentry, become influential persons. After all, money was the pivot, the sole means, the sole mover of a society that Louis XVIII. had insisted upon creating in imitation of England. On the way from the Rue de la Clef to the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, the young man unfolded to the old doctor the summary of his reflections, which were, besides, in keeping with De Marsay's advice.

"I must," he said, "be forgotten for three or four years, and seek a profession. Perhaps I may make a name by a book on politics or moral statistics, or by some treatise on one of the questions of the hour. In short, while trying to marry a young girl who will consider me eligible, I will work under cover and in silence."

By carefully studying the young man's face, the doctor recognized the seriousness of the wounded man who longs for revenge. He highly approved of this plan.

"Neighbor," he said, in conclusion, "if you have cast off the skin of the old nobility, which is no longer admissible nowadays, after three or four years of a steady, industrious life, I will undertake to find you a superior, beautiful, amiable and pious young girl, possessed of seven to eight hundred

thousand francs, who will make you happy and of whom you will be proud, but who will be noble only in heart."

"Eh! doctor!" cried the young man, "nowadays there is no longer a nobility, there is only an aristocracy."

"Go and pay your debts of honor and return here; I am going to engage the front seat of the diligence, for my ward is with me," said the old man.

At six o'clock that night, the three travelers left in the *Ducler* from the Rue Dauphine. Ursule, who had put on a veil, never spoke a word. After having, through an impulse of superficial gallantry, sent that kiss which did as much havoc with Ursule as a whole book of love would have done, Savinien had entirely forgotten the doctor's ward in the torments of his debts, and, besides, his hopeless love for Émilie de Kergarouët did not allow him to give a thought to a few looks exchanged with a little girl of Nemours; and so he did not recognize her when the old man helped her up first and placed himself beside her so as to separate her from the young viscount.

"I shall have some accounts to give you," said the doctor to the young man, "I am bringing you all your old papers."

"I very nearly did not come," said Savinien, "for I had to order some clothes and linen; the philistines have robbed me of everything, and I am arriving like the prodigal son."

However interesting the subjects of conversation

between the young and the old man might be, however witty certain of Savinien's answers, the young girl remained dumb until the twilight, her green veil lowered, her hands crossed over her shawl.

"Mademoiselle does not look as if she had been fascinated by Paris," said Savinien finally, piqued.

"I am glad to return to Nemours," she replied in a voice of emotion, raising her veil. In spite of the darkness, Savinien then recognized her by the size of her plaits and her shining blue eyes.

"And I, I leave Paris without regret to bury myself in Nemours, since I find my beautiful neighbor there," he said. "I hope, Monsieur le Docteur, that you will allow me to call upon you; I love music, and I remember having heard Mademoiselle Ursule's piano."

"I do not know, monsieur," said the doctor gravely, "whether your mother will wish to see you visiting an old man who is bound to feel all a mother's anxiety for this dear child."

This guarded reply gave Savinien much food for thought and he then remembered the kiss so lightly sent. The night had come, the heat was oppressive, Savinien and the doctor were the first to fall asleep. Ursule, who was awake a long time making plans, succumbed toward midnight. She had removed her little hat of ordinary plaited straw. Her head, covered with an embroidered cap, soon lay upon her godfather's shoulder. At break of day, at Bouron, Savinien was the first to awaken. He then noticed Ursule with the disordered head

caused by the jolting; the cap was crumpled, turned up; the unrolled plaits fell on both sides of her face, flushed with the heat of the carriage; but, in this situation, which would be dreadful for women who depend upon toilette, youth and beauty triumph. Innocence always enjoys good sleep. The half-parted lips showed pretty teeth, the loosened shawl disclosed, without offence to Ursule, under the folds of a colored muslin gown, all the grace of her body. In short, the purity of this virgin soul shone in this physiognomy and was seen to all the better advantage in that no other expression disturbed it. Old Minoret, waking, replaced his daughter's head in the corner of the carriage so that she could be more comfortable; she let him do as he pleased without noticing it, so soundly was she sleeping after all the nights spent in thinking over Savinien's misfortune.

"Poor little thing!" he said to his neighbor, "she sleeps like the child that she is."

"You must be proud of her," rejoined Savinien, "for she seems to be as good as she is beautiful."

"Ah! she is the joy of the house. Were she my daughter I could not love her more. She will be sixteen on the fifth of February next. God grant that I may live long enough to marry her to a man who will make her happy! I wanted to take her to the play in Paris, which she was visiting for the first time; but she refused, the curé of Nemours had forbidden it. 'But,' I said to her, 'when you are married suppose your husband should wish to take

you?'- -'I will do all that my husband wishes,' she answered. 'If he asks me to do some wrong thing and I am weak enough to obey him, he will be charged with those sins before God; but for his sake I should of course draw upon all my strength to resist him.'"

Entering Nemours, at five in the morning, Ursule awoke, all abashed at her untidiness and at meeting Savinien's look of admiration. In the hour that the diligence takes in coming from Bouron, where it stops a few minutes, the young man had fallen in love with Ursule. He had studied the sincerity of this soul, the beauty of body, the whiteness of the complexion, the delicacy of feature, the charm of the voice which had uttered the short and expressive sentence in which the poor child told all while wishing to tell nothing. In short, I do not know what presentiment told him that Ursule was the wife described to him by the doctor, whilst framing her in gold with these magic words, "Seven to eight hundred thousand francs!"

"In three or four years she will be twenty and I shall be twenty-seven; the good old man spoke of tests, of work, and good conduct! However cunning he may appear, he will end by telling me his secret."

The three neighbors separated opposite their houses, and Savinien put coquetry into his adieus by casting a look full of entreaty at Ursule. Madame de Portenduère let her son sleep until midday. In spite of the fatigue of the journey the

doctor and Ursule went to High Mass. Savinien's deliverance and his return in the doctor's company had explained the object of the latter's absence to the politicians of the town and to the heirs who were assembled in the market-place in a conclave similar to the one they had held there a fortnight before. To the great astonishment of the groups, on the way out from mass, Madame de Portenduère stopped old Minoret, who offered her his arm and took her home. The old lady wished to invite him, as well as his ward, to dinner that same day, telling him that Monsieur le Curé would be her other guest.

"He wanted to show Ursule Paris," said Minoret-Levrault.

"Plague take him! the old man never takes a step without his little nurse!" cried Crémière.

"There must be great intimacy between them for Madame de Portenduère to take his arm," said Massin.

"And you have never guessed that your uncle has sold his stock and released young Portenduère!" cried Goupil. "He refused it to my master, but he did not refuse his mistress—Ah! you are done for. The viscount will propose marriage settlements instead of a bond, and the doctor will make the husband indebted to his treasure of a goddaughter for all that it is necessary to give in order to conclude such an alliance."

"It might not be a mistake to marry Ursule to Monsieur Savinien," said the butcher. "The old lady is giving a dinner to-night to Monsieur Minoret,

Tiennette came as early as five o'clock to reserve a fillet of beef."

"Well, Dionis, this is a fine piece of work!" said Massin, hastening to meet the notary, who was coming into the market-place.

"Well, what? All is going well," replied the notary. "Your uncle has sold his stock, and Madame de Portenduère has asked me to call upon her to sign a bond of a hundred thousand francs mortgaged upon her property and lent by your uncle."

"Yes, but if the young people were to marry?"

"It is as if you were to tell me that Goupil was my successor," replied the notary.

"The two things are not impossible," said Goupil.

Upon her return from mass, the old lady sent word to her son by Tiennette to come to see her.

This little house had three rooms on the first story. Madame de Portenduère's and that of her late husband were on the same side, separated by a large dressing-room lighted by a borrowed light, and uniting again in a little anteroom opening upon the staircase. The window of the other room, occupied at all times by Savinien, looked out, as did his father's, on the road. The staircase extended behind, in such a way as to provide this room with a small study lighted on the side of the courtyard by a round window. Madame de Portenduère's room, the gloomiest in the whole house, looked out upon the courtyard; but the widow passed her days in the parlor on the ground floor, communicating by a corridor with the kitchen, which was built at the

bottom of the courtyard; so that this parlor served both as salon and dining-room. The room of the late Monsieur de Portenduère remained in the same state as on the day of his death; the deceased only was missing. Madame de Portenduère had made the bed herself, placing on it her husband's naval uniform, sword, red ribbon, orders and hat. The gold snuff-box from which the viscount had taken a last pinch was on the pedestal, with his prayer-book, watch and the cup from which he had drunk. His white hair, framed and arranged in a single lock, hung over the crucifix with its holy water font in the alcove. In short, the knickknacks which he used, his newspapers, furniture, the Dutch spittoon, his field-glass hanging up over the mantelpiece, nothing was missing. The widow had stopped the old timepiece at the hour of his death, which was thus indicated for all time. One could still smell the powder and snuff of the deceased. The hearth was as he had left it. To go in there was to see him again in meeting with all the things that told of his habits. His great gold-headed cane remained where he had placed it, together with his thick doeskin gloves close by. On a bracket shone a coarsely carved gold vase, worth a thousand crowns, presented to him by Havanna, which, at the time of the American War of Independence, he defended from an attack of the English whilst fighting against a superior force, after having safely brought into port the convoy he was protecting. As a reward, the King of Spain had made him a Chevalier

of his orders. Raised for this feat to the rank of commodore at the first promotion, he received the red ribbon. Sure then of the first vacancy, he married his wife, who had two hundred thousand francs. But the Revolution prevented promotion, and Monsieur de Portenduère emigrated.

"Where is my mother?" said Savinien to Tiennette.

"She is waiting for you in your father's room," replied the old Breton servant.

Savinien could not suppress a thrill. He knew the rigidity of his mother's principles, her creed of honor, her loyalty, her faith in the nobility, and he foresaw a scene. And so he went as if to an assault, his heart beating, his face almost pale. In the half-light filtering through the blinds, he saw his mother, dressed in black, wearing a solemn air befitting this chamber of the dead.

"Monsieur le Vicomte," she said, when she saw him, rising and seizing his hand to lead him beside the paternal bed, "there your father expired, a man of honor, dying without a single self-reproach. His spirit is there. He must indeed have lamented up there at seeing his son sullied by an imprisonment for debt. Under the ancient monarchy, you might have been spared this mud-stain through a *lettre de cachet* and by being shut up for a few days in one of the State prisons. But, at length, here you are before your father, who hears you. You who know all that you did before going into this ignoble prison, can you swear to me before this shadow and before

God, who sees all, that you have never committed any dishonorable action, that your debts were the result of youthful impulse, and that, finally, your honor is unsullied? If your blameless father were there, alive, in this armchair, if he asked you for an account of your conduct, after having listened to you, would he embrace you?"

"Yes, mother," said the young man, with respectful seriousness.

She then opened her arms and pressed her son to her heart while shedding a few tears.

"Then let us forget it all," she said, "it is only a little money the less; I will pray God that we may recover it, and, since you are still worthy of your name, kiss me, for I have suffered much!"

"I swear, my dear mother," he said, stretching out his hand over the bed, "never again to give you the least trouble of this sort, and to do all I can to atone for my early shortcomings."

"Come to breakfast, my child," she said, leaving the room.

If the laws of the stage are to be applied to this story, Savinien's arrival, by introducing to Nemours the only character yet wanting amongst those who are to figure in this little drama, here brings the prologue to an end.

PART SECOND

PART SECOND

THE MINORET INHERITANCE

*

The action commenced with an arrangement so often employed in ancient as well as in modern literature, that nobody would have believed in its effects, in 1829, had it not been a question of an old Bretonne, a Kergarouët, a refugee! But, let us hasten to acknowledge, that in 1829, the nobility had recovered in morals a little of the ground lost in politics. Moreover, the feeling which governs the relatives from the moment there is a question of matrimonial relations is an imperishable feeling, very closely bound up in the existence of civilized society and imbibed into the family spirit. It prevails in Geneva as in Vienna, as in Nemours, where Zélie Levrault but lately refused her consent to her son's marriage with the daughter of a bastard. Nevertheless, all social law has its exceptions. And so Savinien was considering how to bend his mother's pride before Ursule's innate nobleness. The struggle began on the spot. As soon as Savinien was

seated at table, his mother told him of the horrible letters, according to her, that the Kergarouëts and the Portenduères had written to her.

"There is no more family nowadays, mother," answered Savinien, "there are only individuals! The nobles are no longer a solid party. To-day no one asks you if you are a Portenduère, if you are brave, if you are a statesman; everybody asks you, 'What taxes do you pay?'"

"And the King?" asked the old lady.

"The King is caught between the two chambers like a man between his lawful wife and his mistress. And so I too must marry a rich girl, no matter what family she belongs to, a peasant's daughter, if she has a dowry of a million and if she is sufficiently well educated, that is to say, if she comes from a school.'"

"That is another thing!" said the old lady.

Savinien frowned at hearing these words. He knew this granite will, called Breton obstinacy, for which his mother was well-known, and he wanted at once to know her opinion about this delicate matter.

"So then," he said, "if I were to love a young girl, like our neighbor's ward, for instance little Ursule, you would oppose my marriage?"

"As long as I live," she said. "After my death, you alone will be responsible for the honor and blood of the Portenduères and the Kergarouëts."

"Then you would let me die of hunger and despair for the sake of an idle fancy which nowadays only becomes a reality through the lustre of wealth?"

"You would serve France and trust in God!"

"You would postpone my happiness until after your death?"

"It would be horrible of you, that's all."

"Louis XIV. nearly married the niece of Mazarin, a parvenu."

"Mazarin himself opposed it."

"And Scarron's widow?"

"She was a d'Aubigné! Besides, the marriage was secret. But I am very old, my son," she said, tossing her head. "When I am no more, you will marry as you please."

Savinien both loved and respected his mother; he immediately, but silently, opposed the old Kergarouët's obstinacy with an equal stubbornness, and resolved never to have any other wife than Ursule, who, by this opposition, as always happens in similar occurrences, acquired the merit of a forbidden thing.

When, after vespers, Doctor Minoret and Ursule, dressed in white and pink, entered this chilly parlor, the child was seized with nervous trembling as if she were in the presence of the Queen of France, and had some favor to ask of her. Since her explanation with the doctor, this little house had assumed the proportions of a palace, and the old lady all the social weight that a duchess must have had in the middle ages, in the eyes of a bondsman's daughter. Never had Ursule so desperately compared as at this moment the distance that divided a Vicomte de Portenduère from the daughter of a

bandmaster, once a singer at the Italiens, an organist's natural son, and her existence depended upon a doctor's kindness.

"What is the matter, my child?" said the old lady, making her sit down beside her.

"Madame, I am confused at the honor you deign to show me—"

"Eh! little one," replied Madame de Portenduère in her most sour tone, "I know how much your guardian loves you and I want to please him, for he brought me back the prodigal son."

"But, my dear mother," said Savinien, wounded to the heart at seeing Ursule's quick flush and the terrible contraction with which she repressed her tears, "even were we under no obligation to Monsieur le Chevalier Minoret, it seems to me that we could always feel happy at the pleasure mademoiselle gives us by accepting your invitation."

And the young nobleman squeezed the doctor's hand significantly, adding:

"You wear, monsieur, the order of Saint-Michel, the oldest order in France and that always confers nobility."

Ursule's exceeding beauty, to which her almost hopeless love had for several days lent that depth which great painters have imparted to those of their portraits in which the soul is markedly conspicuous, had suddenly struck Madame de Portenduère, whilst causing her to suspect an ambitious calculation beneath the doctor's generosity. And so the sentence which Savinien had then answered was said

with an intention which wounded the doctor in all that he held most dear; but he could not suppress a smile at hearing himself called Chevalier by Savinien, and recognized in this exaggeration the audacity of lovers who never flinch before any ridicule.

"The order of Saint-Michel, to obtain which so many follies were formerly committed, has gone out, Monsieur le Vicomte," replied the former royal physician, "as so many privileges have gone out! Nowadays it is only given to doctors and poor artists. Therefore kings have done well to combine it with that of Saint-Lazare, a saint who was, I believe, a poor devil restored to life by a miracle! On that score, the order of Saint-Michel and Saint-Lazare should be, for us, a symbol."

After this reply, which was tinged with both mockery and dignity, silence reigned without anybody trying to break it, and it was becoming irksome, when someone knocked.

"Here is our dear curé," said the old lady, rising, leaving Ursule alone, and advancing to meet the Abbé Chaperon, an honor she had shown to neither Ursule nor the doctor.

The old man smiled in looking alternately at his ward and Savinien. To complain of Madame de Portenduère's manner or to take offence at it was a reef upon which a small-minded man would have run aground; but Minoret had learnt too much not to avoid it; he began to chat with the viscount of the danger Charles X. was running, after having

entrusted the management of his policy to the Prince de Polignac. When time enough had elapsed in talking over matters for the doctor to have no appearance of revenging himself, he presented the old lady, almost jestingly, with the notes of proceedings and the receipted bills that verified the account made by his notary.

"Has my son acknowledged it?" she said, giving Savinien a look which he answered by a bow of the head. "Well, then, that returns to Dionis," she added, pushing away the papers and treating this matter with the scorn that in her eyes money deserved.

To disparage wealth was, in Madame de Portenduère's opinion, to exalt the nobility and rob the bourgeoisie of its importance. A few minutes after, Goupil came, on behalf of his employer, to ask for the accounts between Savinien and Monsieur Minoret.

"And why?" said the old lady.

"To form the basis of the bond; there is no payment in specie," replied the head clerk, casting impudent looks around him.

Ursule and Savinien, who for the first time exchanged glances with this horrible person, experienced the same sensation that is caused by a toad, but aggravated by a sinister presentiment. Both had that indefinable, confused vision of the future, which is nameless, but which could be explained as an action of the inner being of which the Swedenborgian had spoken to the doctor. The conviction

that this venomous Goupil would be fatal to them made Ursule tremble; but she recovered from her trouble by feeling an unspeakable pleasure in seeing Savinien sharing her emotion.

"He is not handsome, Monsieur Dionis's clerk!" said Savinien when Goupil had shut the door.

"And what does it matter whether those people are handsome or ugly?" said Madame de Portenduère.

"I do not owe him a grudge for his ugliness," rejoined the curé, "but for his malice, which is unbounded; there is villainy in it."

In spite of his desire to be pleasant, the doctor became stately and cold. The two lovers were uneasy. But for the good nature of the Abbé Chaperon, whose gentle gaiety enlivened the dinner, the situation of the doctor and his ward would have been almost intolerable. At dessert, seeing Ursule turn pale, he said:

"If you do not feel well, my child, you have only to cross the road."

"What is it, my love?" said the old lady to the young girl.

"Alas! madame," rejoined the doctor, severely, "her soul is chilled, accustomed as she is to meet nothing but smiles."

"A very bad education, Monsieur le Docteur," said Madame de Portenduère. "Is it not so, Monsieur le Curé?"

"Yes, madame," rejoined Minoret giving the curé a look which silenced him. "I see that I have made

life impossible for this angelic nature, if she had to go out into the world; but I shall not die without having secured her from coldness, indifference and hatred."

"Godfather!—I beg of you—enough. I do not suffer here," she said, braving Madame de Portenduère's look rather than give too much meaning to her words by looking at Savinien.

"I do not know, madame," then said Savinien to his mother, "whether Mademoiselle Ursule suffers, but I know that you torture me."

Upon hearing this remark forced from this generous young man by his mother's manners, Ursule turned pale and begged Madame de Portenduère to excuse her; she rose, took her guardian's arm, curtsied, went out, returned home, hastily rushed into her godfather's salon, where she sat down near the piano, buried her head in her hands and burst into tears.

"Why did you not leave the guidance of your feelings to my old experience, cruel child?" cried the doctor in despair. "The nobility never think themselves indebted to us bourgeois. By serving them, we do our duty, that is all. Besides, the old lady saw that Savinien was looking at you with pleasure, she is afraid that he may love you."

"After all, he is saved!" she said, "but to try to humiliate a man like you—"

"Wait for me, little one."

When the doctor returned to Madame de Portenduère's he found Dionis there, accompanied by

Messieurs Bongrand and Levrault, the mayor, the witnesses required by law for the validity of deeds drawn up in parishes where there is only one notary. Minoret took Monsieur Dionis aside and whispered a word in his ear, after which the notary read out the acknowledgment; in it Madame de Portenduère was to give a mortgage on all her property to the extent of repaying the hundred thousand francs the doctor had lent the viscount, and the interest was stipulated at five per cent. At the reading of this clause, the curé looked at Minoret, who answered the abbé by a slight nod of approval. The poor priest went to whisper a few words to his penitent, to which she replied, half-aloud:

"I will not be under any obligation to those people."

"My mother, monsieur, leaves me the best part," said Savinien to the doctor, "she will return you all the money, and entrusts the gratitude to me."

"But you will have to find eleven thousand francs the first year, on account of the costs of the deed," rejoined the curé.

"Monsieur," said Minoret to Dionis, "as Monsieur and Madame de Portenduère are unable to pay the registration, add the costs of the deed to the capital, I will pay them."

Dionis made some references, and the capital was then fixed at one hundred and seven thousand francs. When all was signed, Minoret pleaded fatigue as an excuse for retiring at the same time as the notary and the witnesses.

"Madame," said the curé, who alone remained with the viscount, "why wound that excellent Monsieur Minoret, who has nevertheless saved you at least twenty-five thousand francs in Paris, and who has had the delicacy to leave your son twenty thousand for his debts of honor?"

"Your Minoret is a sneak," she said, taking a pinch of snuff, "he knows very well what he is about."

"My mother thinks that he wants to force me to marry his ward by gobbling up our farm, as if a Portenduère, son of a Kergarouët, could be forced to marry against his will."

An hour afterward, Savinien called at the doctor's, where the heirs chanced to be, brought there by curiosity. The young viscount's appearance produced a sensation that was all the keener as, in each of the company, it roused different emotions. Mesdemoiselles Crémière and Massin whispered while looking at Ursule, who was blushing. The mothers said to Désiré that Goupil might be right with regard to this marriage. The eyes of all present then turned upon the doctor, who did not rise to receive the nobleman, but was pleased to greet him with an inclination of the head without leaving the dice-box, for he was playing a game of backgammon with Monsieur Bongrand. The doctor's coolness surprised everybody.

"Ursule, my child," he said, "give us a little music."

Seeing the young girl, happy to be noticed, fly to

the instrument and begin rummaging the volumes bound in green, the heirs accepted the torture and silence which were about to be inflicted upon them, with demonstrations of pleasure, so anxious were they to know what was hatching between their uncle and the Portenduères.

It often happens that a piece, poor in itself, but played by a young girl under the influence of deep feeling, makes more impression than a grand overture pompously rendered by a skilled orchestra. In all music, besides the composer's idea, there exists the soul of the player, who, through a license acquired only in this art, may give meaning and poetry to phrases that have no great value. Chopin to-day proves the truth of this fact on the thankless piano, as has been already demonstrated by Paganini on the violin. This grand genius is not so much a musician as a soul that becomes alive and which would transmit itself through every kind of music, even through simple harmonies. From her sublime and perilous organization Ursule belonged to this school of rare genius; but old Schmucke, the master who used to come every Saturday, and who, during Ursule's stay in Paris, saw her every day, had brought his pupil's talent to the height of its perfection. *Rousseau's Dream*, the piece chosen by Ursule, one of the youthful compositions of Hérold, is, moreover, not lacking in a certain depth which can be developed in the playing; she threw into it the feelings that were agitating her and thoroughly justified the title of

caprice that this fragment bears. By a touch both sweet and dreamy, her soul was speaking to the young man's soul and enwrapt it with almost visible ideas as with a cloud. Seated at the end of the piano, his elbow leaning upon the lid and his head in his left hand, Savinien was admiring Ursule, whose eyes, fixed upon the woodwork, seemed to be searching into a mysterious world. One might have fallen deeply in love for less. Genuine feeling has its magnetism, and Ursule wanted in some way to show her mind, as a coquette adorns herself in order to please. So Savinien penetrated into this delicious kingdom, led away by the heart, that, to interpret itself, borrowed the power of the only art which speaks to thought by thought itself, without the help of words, color or form. Sincerity has the same power over man as childhood, it has the same charm and the same irresistible fascination; now Ursule had never been more sincere than at this moment when she was just beginning a new life. The curé came to tear the nobleman from his dream by asking him to make the fourth at whist. Ursule continued playing, the heirs left, with the exception of Désiré, who was trying to find out the intentions of his great-uncle, of the viscount and of Ursule.

"You have as much talent as soul, mademoiselle," said Savinien when the young girl shut her piano to come and sit beside her godfather. "Who is your master?"

"A German, living quite close to the Rue Dauphine, on the Quai Conti," said the doctor. "Had he not given Ursule a lesson every day during our visit to Paris, he would have come this morning."

"He is not only a great musician," said Ursule, "but an adorably simple man."

"The lessons must be very expensive!" cried Désiré.

The players exchanged an ironical smile. When the game was finished, the doctor, who had been gloomy up till then, assumed, in looking at Savinien, the look of a man who is grieved at having to fulfil an obligation.

"Monsieur," he said to him, "I am very grateful for the feeling that has led you to pay me so prompt a visit; but your mother attributes very ignoble after-thoughts to me, and I should be giving her the right to a genuine belief in them did I not beg you never to come again to see me, in spite of the honor your visits do me and of the pleasure I should have in cultivating your society. My honor and my peace require that all neighborly relations should cease between us. Tell your mother that, if I do not beg her to do us the honor, my ward and I, of accepting an invitation to dinner on Sunday next, it is because of the certainty I have that she would be indisposed on that day."

The old man held out his hand to the young viscount, who pressed it affectionately and said:

"You are right, monsieur!"

Then he withdrew, but not without making a bow to Ursule, a bow that expressed melancholy rather than disappointment.

Désiré left at the same time as the nobleman; but he found it impossible to exchange a word with him, as Savinien rushed home.

*

For two days, the disagreement between the Portenduères and Doctor Minoret was the subject of conversation for the heirs, who paid tribute to Dionis's genius, and now looked upon their inheritance as saved. And so, in a century in which ranks are leveled, in which the rage for equality places all individuals on a level and threatens everything, even military subordination, the last entrenchment of power in France; in which, consequently, the passions have no other obstacles to overcome than personal antipathies or the want of balance between fortunes, the obstinacy of an old Bretonne and Doctor Minoret's dignity raised barriers between these two lovers that were fated, as in bygone times, less to destroy than to strengthen love. To a passionate man, every woman is worth what she costs him; now, Savinien foresaw a struggle, efforts and uncertainties which were already making this young girl dear to him; he wanted to win her. Perhaps our feelings obey the laws of Nature upon the duration of her creations; a long life has a long childhood!

The next morning, on rising, both Ursule and Savinien thought of the same thing. This understanding would have given rise to love even had it not already been the most delightful proof. When the young girl slightly parted her curtains in order

to allow her eyes the strictly necessary space for looking over at Savinien's house, she perceived her lover's face above the opposite window-fastening. When one thinks of the immense service windows render to lovers, it seems natural enough that they should be made an object for taxation. After having thus protested against her godfather's hardness of heart, Ursule lowered the curtains and opened her windows to shut the outer blinds through which she could in future see without being seen. She went up to her room at least seven or eight times during the day and always found the young viscount writing, tearing up paper and beginning to write again, doubtless to her!

The next morning, upon waking Ursule, La Bougival brought her the following letter:

TO MADEMOISELLE URSULE.

"MADEMOISELLE,

"I do not delude myself at all as to the mistrust a young man must inspire who has placed himself in the position from which I escaped only through your guardian's intervention; in future I must offer more security than anyone else; therefore, mademoiselle, it is with the deepest humility that I throw myself at your feet to confess my love to you. This declaration is not prompted by passion; it springs from a certainty that embraces the whole life. A foolish passion for my young aunt, Madame de Kergarouët, threw me into prison; in the complete disappearance of my memories, and of this image which has been obliterated by yours, will you not see a mark of sincere love? From the moment I saw you asleep, and so graceful in your childish slumber, at Bouron, you have occupied my mind like a queen who takes possession of her

empire. I will not have any other for wife than you. You have all the distinction that I wish for in her who is to bear my name. The education you have received and the dignity of your heart place you on a level with the most exalted positions. But I mistrust myself too much to try to portray you to yourself, I can only love you. After having heard you yesterday I remembered those sentences which seem written for you:

"'Made to attract all hearts and charm the eye, both gentle and intelligent, clever and rational, polished as if her life had been passed in courts, simple as the hermit who has never known the world, the fire of her soul is tempered by the divine modesty in her eyes.'

"I have felt the value of this beautiful soul which reveals itself in the slightest things about you. That is what gives me the courage to ask you, if you do not yet love anyone, to let me prove to you by my attentions and my conduct that I am worthy of you. It is a matter of life to me; you cannot doubt but that all my strength will be employed not only to please you, but still more to merit your esteem, which is equivalent to that of the whole earth. With this hope, Ursule, and if you will allow me to worship you in my heart, Nemours will be a paradise to me, and the most difficult undertakings will only afford me gratification which shall be ascribed to you as one ascribes all to God. Tell me then that I may call myself

"YOUR SAVINIEN."

Ursule kissed this letter; then, after having read it again and clung to it with foolish emotion, she dressed herself to go and show it to her godfather.

"*Mon Dieu!* I had almost left without saying my prayers!" she said, returning to kneel at her prie-dieu.

A few moments after, she went down to the garden and there found her guardian, to whom she gave Savinien's letter to read. Both sat down on the bench, under the clump of climbing plants, opposite the Chinese pavilion; Ursule waiting for some remark from the old man, and the old man reflecting much too long a time for an impatient girl. Finally, the result of their secret interview was the following letter, which the doctor had doubtless partly dictated:

"MONSIEUR,

"I cannot but feel very much honored by the letter in which you offer me your hand; but at my age, and according to the laws of my bringing up, I was obliged to show it to my guardian, who is all the family I have, and whom I love both as a father and a friend. Here are the cruel objections he has given me and which must serve as my answer. I am, Monsieur le Vicomte, a poor girl whose future fortune depends entirely, not only on my godfather's good will, but still more on the uncertain measures he will take to elude the ill-will that his heirs bear me. Although I am the legitimate daughter of Joseph Mirouët, bandmaster in the Forty-fifth Infantry Regiment, as he was my guardian's natural half-brother, a suit, although for no reason, might be brought against a young girl who would be defenceless. You see, monsieur, that my small fortune is not my greatest misfortune. I have many reasons for being humble. It is for your sake, not for my own, that I submit such observations to you, which are often of little weight with loving, devoted hearts. But you must also consider, monsieur, that if I did not lay them before you I should be suspected of wishing to make your tenderness overlook obstacles that the world, and your mother particularly, would deem insurmountable. I shall be sixteen in four months. Perhaps you will acknowledge that we are both too

young and too inexperienced to fight the miseries of a life started without any other income than that which I owe to the kindness of the late Monsieur de Jordy. Besides, my guardian does not wish me to marry before I am twenty. Who knows what fate is reserving for you during those four years, the best of your life? Do not blight it then for a poor girl.

"After having stated to you, monsieur, my dear guardian's reasons, who, far from opposing my happiness, desires to contribute to it with all his power, and hopes to see his protection, which must soon grow feeble, replaced by a tenderness equal to his own, it only remains for me to tell you how much I am touched both by your offer and the kind compliments which accompany it. The prudence which dictates this answer comes from an old man to whom life is well known; but the gratitude that I convey to you is that of a young girl whose mind knows no other feeling.

"Thus, monsieur, I can sign myself in all sincerity,

"Your servant,

"URSULE MIROUET."

Savinien did not reply. Was he making fresh attempts with his mother? Had this letter quenched his love? A thousand such questions, all insoluble, tortured Ursule horribly, and, indirectly, the doctor, who suffered from his dear child's slightest agitation. Ursule would often go up to her room and look across at Savinien, whom she could see, thoughtfully sitting at his table and constantly turning his gaze upon her windows. At the end of a week, not before that, she received the following letter from Savinien, the delay being accounted for by an increase of love:

TO MADEMOISELLE URSULE MIROUËT.

"DEAR URSULE,

"I am somewhat of a Breton, and, once my mind is made up, nothing makes me change it. Your guardian, whom may God preserve for a long time yet, is right; but am I then wrong to love you? Therefore do I only wish to know from you whether you love me. Tell me, if only by a sign, and then those four years will be the best of all my life! One of my friends has forwarded a letter to my great-uncle, Vice-Admiral de Kergarouët, in which I ask his influence in order to enter the navy. This good old man, touched by my misfortunes, has answered to say that the king's free will would be thwarted by the regulations, in case I should desire any rank. Nevertheless, after three months' study at Toulon, the minister will send me as steerage master; then, after a cruise against the Algerians, with whom we are at war, I can undergo an examination and become a candidate. Finally, if I distinguish myself in the expedition preparing against Algiers, I shall certainly be made a midshipman; but in how long a time? Nobody can say. Only, the regulations will be made as elastic as possible to reinstate the name of Portenduère in the navy. I must only obtain you from your godfather, I see that; and your respect for him makes you still dearer to my heart. Before replying I will have an interview with him; upon his answer depends my whole future. Whatever happens, know that, rich or poor, daughter of a bandmaster, or daughter of a king, you are to me the woman whom the voice of my heart has designated. Dear Ursule, we are living in an age in which the prejudices, which would formerly have separated us, have not sufficient strength to prevent our marriage. And so I send you all the feelings of my heart, and to your uncle the pledges which will assure him of your happiness! He does not know that I loved you more in a few moments than he has loved you for fifteen years.—Till to-night."

"Here, godfather," said Ursule, holding out this letter to him through an impulse of pride.

"Ah! my child!" cried the doctor, after having read the letter, "I am even more pleased than you are. The gentleman has, by this resolution, redeemed all his faults."

After dinner, Savinien called upon the doctor, who was then walking with Ursule along the balustrade of the terrace by the river. The viscount had received his clothes from Paris, and the lover had not failed to enhance his natural advantages by as careful and elegant a dress as if it were a question of pleasing the beautiful, proud Comtesse de Kergarouët. When she saw him coming toward them from the steps, the poor little thing clasped her uncle's arm just as if she were holding back from a precipice, and the doctor heard deep, muffled palpitations which made him shudder.

"Leave us, my child," he said to his ward, who sat down on the steps of the Chinese pavilion after having allowed Savinien to take her hand, and kiss it respectfully.

"Monsieur, would you give this dear young girl to a naval captain?" said the young viscount to the doctor, in a low voice.

"No," said Minoret, smiling, "we might have to wait too long; but—to a lieutenant."

Tears of joy moistened the young man's eyes, and he squeezed the old man's hand very affectionately.

"Then I will go," he replied, "and study and try

to learn in six months what the pupils at the Naval College have learnt in six years."

"Go?" said Ursule, rushing toward them from the steps.

"Yes, mademoiselle, to be worthy of you. And so, the more haste I make, the more affection I shall be showing you."

"To-day is the third of October," she said, looking at him with infinite tenderness, "go after the nineteenth."

"Yes," said the old man, "we will keep the day of Saint-Savinien."

"Then good-bye," cried the young man, "I must spend this week in Paris, and make the necessary applications, preparations and purchases of books and mathematical instruments, win the minister's favor, and obtain the best possible terms."

Ursule and her godfather conducted Savinien as far as the gate. After having seen him re-enter his mother's house, they saw him come out accompanied by Tiennette, who was carrying a small trunk.

"Why, if you are rich, do you force him to serve in the navy?" said Ursule to her godfather.

"I think that it will soon be I who will have created his debts," said the doctor, smiling. "I do not force him at all; but the uniform, my dear love, and the Cross of the Legion of Honor gained in a fight, will efface many stains. In four years, he may succeed in commanding a vessel, and that is all I ask of him."

SAVINIEN'S LETTER.

Both sat down on the bench, under the clump of climbing plants, opposite the Chinese pavilion; Ursule waiting for some remark from the old man, and the old man reflecting much too long a time for an impatient girl. Finally, the result of their secret interview was the following letter.

Copyrighted 1887 by S. B. T. Cox

"But he may perish," she said, looking at the doctor with a white face.

"Lovers, like drunkards, have a god of their own," replied the doctor, jokingly.

During the night, unknown to her godfather, the poor little thing, with the help of La Bougival, cut off enough of her long and beautiful fair hair to make a chain; then, on the third day, she coaxed her music master, old Schmucke, to promise to see that her hair was not changed and that the chain was finished for the following Sunday. Upon his return, Savinien informed the doctor and his ward that he had signed his engagement. On the twenty-fifth he was to be at Brest. Invited by the doctor to dine on the eighteenth, he spent nearly two whole days at his house; and, in spite of the most prudent recommendations, the two lovers could not help betraying their good understanding to the eyes of the curé, the justice of the peace, the Nemours doctor and La Bougival.

"Children," said the old man, "you are risking your happiness by not keeping the secret to yourselves."

At last, on his birthday, after mass, during which they had exchanged several looks, Savinien, watched by Ursule, crossed the road and came into the little garden where they both found themselves almost alone. The doctor was indulgently reading his newspapers in the Chinese pavilion.

"Dear Ursule," said Savinien, "will you make

my birthday even greater than my mother could by giving me life a second time—?"

"I know what you want to ask me," said Ursule, interrupting him. "Here, this is my answer"—she added, taking the hair chain from her apron pocket and offering it to him with a nervous trembling which betokened unbounded joy. "Wear this," she said, "for love of me! May my gift keep you from all perils by reminding you that my life is linked with yours!"

"Ah! the little minx, she is giving him a chain of her hair," the doctor was saying to himself. "How did she manage it? Cutting her beautiful fair tresses!—would she then give him my blood?"

"Would you think me very wrong, before going, to ask you to give me a solemn promise that you will never have any other husband than me?" said Savinien, kissing the chain, unable to restrain a tear as he looked at Ursule.

"If I have not already told it to you too plainly, I who went to contemplate the walls of Sainte-Pélagie when you were there," she replied, blushing, "I now repeat it to you, Savinien: I will never love anyone but you and will never belong to anyone but you."

At sight of Ursule, half-hidden in the thicket, the young man could not resist the pleasure of clasping her to his heart and kissing her on the forehead; but she gave a faint cry and sank upon the bench, and when Savinien sat down beside her, asking her pardon, he saw the doctor standing before them.

"My dear monsieur," he said, "Ursule is a regular sensitive-plant, that a harsh word would kill. With her, you ought to moderate the outburst of love. Oh! if you had loved her for sixteen years, you would have been content with her promise," he added, by way of revenge for the remark with which Savinien had concluded his last letter.

Two days after, Savinien left. In spite of the letters he wrote regularly to Ursule, she fell a prey to an apparently causeless illness. Like beautiful fruit attacked by worms, one thought was gnawing at her heart. She lost appetite and her beautiful color. When her godfather first asked her what she felt:

"I want to see the sea," she said.

"It is difficult to take you to any seaport in December," replied the old man.

"Can I go then?" she said.

If high winds arose, Ursule would feel greatly disturbed, believing, in spite of the learned distinctions of her godfather, the curé and the justice of the peace between the winds of sea and those of the land, that Savinien was fighting a hurricane. The justice of the peace made her happy for several days with an engraving of a midshipman in uniform. She would read the newspapers, fancying they might give some news of the cruise for which Savinien had left. She devoured Cooper's naval romances, and tried to learn the naval terms. These proofs of fixity of thought, often pretended by other women, were so natural to Ursule that she

saw each of Savinien's letters in a dream, and never failed to foretell them the very morning, while relating the dream that was their forerunner.

"Now," she said to the doctor, the fourth time that this fact took place without the curé and the doctor being at all surprised: "I am easy; no matter how far away Savinien may be, if he should be wounded, I shall feel it at that very moment."

The old doctor remained sunk in deep meditation, which the justice of the peace and the curé judged to be of a painful nature, from the expression of his face.

"What is the matter with you?" they both asked when Ursule had left them alone.

"Will she live?" replied the old doctor. "Will such a delicate, tender flower be able to withstand any heart-sorrows?"

Nevertheless, the "little dreamer," as the curé nicknamed her, was working ardently; she understood the importance of a good education for a woman of the world, and all the time that was not given to singing, the study of harmony and composition, she spent reading the books that the Abbé Chaperon selected for her from her godfather's library. Even whilst leading this busy life, she was suffering, but without complaint. Sometimes, she would remain whole hours looking at Savinien's window. On Sunday, coming from mass, she would follow Madame de Portenduère, contemplating her with tenderness, for, in spite of her harshness, she loved her as being Savinien's mother. Her piety increased,

she went to mass every morning, for she firmly believed that her dreams were a favor from God. Alarmed at the ravages caused by this love-sickness, on Ursule's birthday the doctor promised to take her to Toulon to see the departure of the Algerian expedition, without informing Savinien, who was to take part in it. The justice of the peace and the curé kept secret the object of the doctor's journey, which appeared to be undertaken for Ursule's health, and which very much puzzled the Minoret heirs. After having seen Savinien once more, in midshipman's uniform, after having boarded the admiral's beautiful vessel, to which the minister had recommended young Portenduère, Ursule, at her lover's entreaty, went to breathe the air of Nice, and traveled down the coast of the Mediterranean as far as Genoa, where she learnt of the arrival of the fleet before Algiers and of the good news of the landing. The doctor would have liked to continue this journey through Italy, as much to distract Ursule as in some degree to finish her education by enlarging her ideas by the comparison of customs and country, and by the charms of the land where dwell the masterpieces of art, and where so many civilizations have left their brilliant traces; but the news of the resistance opposed by the throne to the electors of the famous Chamber of 1830 recalled the doctor to France, where he brought back his ward in a state of blooming health, and enriched by a charming little model of the vessel upon which Savinien was serving.

The elections of 1830 brought some credit to the heirs, who, through the pains of Désiré Minoret and Goupil, formed a committee in Nemours whose efforts caused the liberal candidate to be returned at Fontainebleau. Massin exercised a tremendous influence over the country constituents. Five of the postmaster's tenants were electors. Dionis represented more than eleven votes. Through assembling at the notary's house, Crémière, Massin, the postmaster and their adherents ended by falling into the habit of meeting there. Upon the doctor's return, Dionis' salon had then become the camp of the heirs. The justice of the peace and the mayor, who then formed a league to resist the liberals of Nemours, and who were beaten by the opposition in spite of the efforts of the aristocracy situated in the neighborhood, were closely linked together by their defeat. When Bongrand and the Abbé Chaperon told the doctor the result of this antagonism which, for the first time, formed two parties in Nemours, Charles X. was leaving Rambouillet for Cherbourg. Désiré Minoret, who shared the opinions of the Paris bar, had sent to Nemours for fifteen friends commanded by Goupil, and whom the postmaster supplied with horses to hasten to Paris, where they arrived at Désiré's during the

night of the twenty-eighth. Goupil and Désiré, with this band, co-operated in the capture of the town-hall. Désiré Minoret was decorated with the Legion of Honor, and appointed substitute of the attorney for the crown at Fontainebleau. Goupil was given the Cross of July. Dionis was elected Mayor of Nemours in place of the *Sieur* Levrault, and the municipal council was composed of Minoret-Levrault, deputy; of Massin, Crémière and all the followers of Dionis' salon. Bongrand kept his place only through the influence of his son, appointed attorney for the Crown at Melun, and whose marriage with Mademoiselle Levrault then appeared likely. Seeing that the three per cents were at forty-five, the doctor set out by post for Paris; and invested five hundred and forty thousand francs in certificates to bearer. The remainder of his fortune, which amounted to about two hundred and seventy thousand francs, invested in his name in the same stock, gave him an ostensible income of fifteen thousand francs. He laid out the capital bequeathed by the old professor to Ursule in the same way, as well as the eight thousand francs yielded by the interest of nine years, which gave his ward an income of fourteen hundred francs, with the help of a small sum he added to it so as to enlarge this slight revenue. Following her master's advice, old La Bougival had an income of three hundred and fifty francs by investing five thousand and a few hundred francs' savings in the same way. These prudent speculations, planned between the

doctor and the justice of the peace, were accomplished in the most profound secrecy under cover of the political disturbances. When peace was almost re-established, the doctor bought a little house adjoining his own, and tore it down, as well as the wall of his courtyard, so as to have a coach house and stable built on the ground. To use the capital of a thousand francs' income to set up outhouses seemed madness to the Minoret heirs. The so-called madness began a new era in the doctor's life, for, at a time when horses and carriages were to be procured for almost nothing, he brought back from Paris three superb horses and a barouche.

When, in the beginning of November, 1830, the old man, for the first time, drove to mass on a rainy day, and got down to give his hand to Ursule, all the inhabitants rushed into the market-place, as much to see the doctor's carriage and question his coachman, as to find fault with his ward, to whose excessive ambition Massin, Crémière, the postmaster and their wives attributed their uncle's follies.

"The barouche! eh! Massin!" cried Goupil, "your succession is going capitally, hein?"

"You must have good wages, Cabirolle?" said the postmaster to the son of one of his drivers, who was standing by the horses, "for it is to be hoped that you will not wear out many horseshoes with a man eighty-four years old. How much did the horses cost?"

"Four thousand francs. The carriage, although second-hand, cost two thousand francs; but it is a handsome one, the wheels are a patent."

"What do you say, Cabirolle?" asked Madame Crémière.

"He says *à ma tante,*" replied Goupil, "it is an English idea, and they invented these wheels. Here! you see, nothing can be seen, it all fits in, that's nice, it does not get locked, and there is no longer that horrid end of square iron which used to go beyond the axle."

"What rhymes with *ma tante?*" then said Madame Crémière, innocently.

"What!" said Goupil, "that does not '*tente*' you then?"

"Ah! I understand," she said.

"Well, no, you are an honest woman," said Goupil, "I must not deceive you, the real word is *à patte entre*, because the pin is hidden."

"Yes, madame," said Cabirolle, who was taken in by Goupil's explanation, so seriously had the clerk given it.

"It is a fine carriage all the same," cried Crémière, "and one must be rich to buy a kind like that."

"She is doing well, the little one," said Goupil. "But she is right, she is teaching you how to enjoy life. Why have you not got beautiful horses and carriages, you, Papa Minoret? Will you let yourself be humiliated? Were I in your place I would have a prince's carriage!"

"See, Cabirolle," said Massin, "is it the little one that launches our uncle into these luxuries?"

"I don't know," replied Cabirolle, "but she is almost mistress at home. Master upon master now comes from Paris. They say she is going to study painting."

"I shall seize this opportunity to have my portrait *drawn*," said Madame Crémière.

In the provinces, in speaking of a portrait they still say *drawn*, instead of to have a portrait *taken*.

"And yet the old German is not dismissed," said Madame Massin.

"He is there again to-day," replied Cabirolle.

"You can't have too much of a good thing," said Madame Crémière, making everybody laugh.

"Now," cried Goupil, "you need not reckon on the inheritance. Ursule will soon be seventeen, she is prettier than ever; travel improves youth, and the little humbug has got on the right side of your uncle. Every week the stage brings her five or six packages, and dressmakers and milliners come here to try on her dresses and things. And so my mistress is furious. Wait until Ursule comes out and then look at her little shoulder shawl, a real cashmere at six hundred francs."

Had a thunderbolt fallen in the middle of the group of heirs it would not have produced more effect than these last words of Goupil, who rubbed his hands.

The doctor's old green salon was renovated by an upholsterer from Paris. Judged by the luxury

he was displaying, the old man was at one time accused of having concealed his fortune and of possessing an income of sixty thousand francs, at another of spending his capital to please Ursule. He was alternately called a rich man and a libertine. This remark: "He is an old fool!" summed up the opinion of the country. This false direction of the judgment of the little town had this advantage, that it deceived the heirs, who did not at all suspect Savinien's love for Ursule, which was the real cause of the doctor's expenditure, as he delighted to accustom his ward to her rôle of viscountess, and who, with more than fifty thousand francs a year, gave himself the pleasure of adorning his idol.

In February, 1832, on Ursule's seventeenth birthday, that same morning as she was getting up, she saw Savinien, at his window, in midshipman's uniform.

"How is it that I knew nothing of it?" she said to herself.

Since the capture of Algiers in which Savinien distinguished himself by an act of courage which had gained him the cross, the corvette upon which he served having remained several months at sea, he had found it absolutely impossible to write to the doctor, and he would not leave the service without having consulted him. Anxious to keep such an illustrious name in the navy, the new government had profited by the July disturbances to confer the rank of midshipman upon Savinien. After having obtained leave for a fortnight, the new midshipman

arrived from Toulon by the mail-coach for Ursule's birthday and at the same time to seek the doctor's advice.

"He has come!" cried the goddaughter rushing into her godfather's room.

"All right," he replied, "I can guess the motive which has made him leave the service, and he can now remain in Nemours."

"Ah! it is my birthday; it is all in that word," she said, kissing the doctor.

At a sign she went to make to him, Savinien came at once; she wanted to admire him, for she thought he seemed improved. In fact, military service stamps the gestures, the bearing and appearance of men with decision mingled with gravity, an indefinable uprightness which enables the most superficial observer to recognize a military man under the bourgeois coat; there is no better proof that a man is made to command. Ursule loved Savinien still better for it, and felt a childish delight in walking up and down the little garden on his arm, making him relate the share he had had, *in his character of naval cadet,* in the capture of Algiers. Obviously, Savinien had taken Algiers. She saw everything red, she said, when she was looking at Savinien's decoration. The doctor, who was watching them from his room whilst dressing, came to join them. Without entirely unbosoming himself to the viscount, he then told him that in case Madame de Portenduère should consent to his marriage with Ursule, his goddaughter's fortune

would make the salary from any rank he might attain, superfluous.

"Alas!" said Savinien, "it will take a long time to overcome my mother's opposition. Before my departure, with the alternative of seeing me stay with her if she consented to my marriage with Ursule, or of only seeing me from time to time with the knowledge that I was exposed to the dangers of my profession, she let me go—"

"But, Savinien, we shall be together," said Ursule, taking his hand and shaking it half impatiently.

To see each other, and never to part, was to her the whole of love; she did not look beyond that; and her pretty gesture, and her rebellious accent were expressive of so much innocence that Savinien and the doctor relented. The resignation was sent in, and the presence of her fiancé gave the greatest radiance to Ursule's birthday. Several months after, toward May, domestic life at Doctor Minoret's resumed its tranquillity, but with one more regular visitor. The young viscount's attentions were all the more promptly construed as those of an intended husband, as, whether at mass, or out walking, his and Ursule's manners, although reserved, betrayed the understanding of their hearts. Dionis called the attention of the heirs to the fact that the old man never demanded his interest from Madame de Portenduère, and that the old lady already owed it for three years.

"She will be forced to yield, and consent to her

son's misalliance," said the notary. "If this misfortune happens, it is probable that a large part of your uncle's fortune will serve, according to Basile, as an irresistible argument."

The irritation of the heirs at finding that their uncle preferred Ursule too much not to secure her happiness at their expense, then became as secret as it was deep. Meeting every night since the July revolution at the house of Dionis, they would there curse the two lovers, and the evening seldom drew to a close without their having searched, but vainly, for means of thwarting the old man. Zélie, who, like the doctor, had doubtless profited by the fall in stock to advantageously invest her enormous capital, was the hardest upon the orphan girl and the Portenduères. One night when Goupil, who, however, took care not to be bored at these receptions, had come to inquire the affairs of the town which were there being discussed, Zélie had a revival of hatred; in the morning she had seen the doctor, Ursule and Savinien returning in the barouche from a drive in the neighborhood, in an intimacy which betrayed all.

"I would willingly give thirty thousand francs for God to summon our uncle to Himself before the marriage of this Portenduère and that conceited little creature could take place," she said.

Goupil accompanied Monsieur and Madame Minoret as far as the middle of their big courtyard, and said, looking all around to see that they were quite alone:

"Will you give me the means of buying up

Dionis's practice, and I will break off Monsieur de Portenduère's marriage with Ursule?"

"How?" asked the giant.

"Do you think I am fool enough to tell you my plan?" replied the head clerk.

"Well, my boy, set them by the ears and we will see," said Zélie.

"I am not going to enter at all upon such worries for a 'we shall see!' The young man is a swaggerer who might kill me, and I should have to be roughshod, and be his match with sword and pistol. Set me up, and I will keep my word."

"Prevent this marriage and then I will set you up," replied the postmaster.

"You have been nine months considering whether you should lend me fifteen thousand wretched francs to buy the practice of Lecœur, the attorney, and do you expect me to trust to this promise? Go, you will lose your uncle's inheritance, and it will be a good job."

"Were it only a question of fifteen thousand francs and Lecœur's practice, it might be managed," replied Zélie, "but to be your security for fifty thousand crowns!"

"But I will pay," said Goupil, darting a bewitching glance at Zélie which encountered the postmistress's haughty look.

It was like poison on steel.

"We will wait," said Zélie.

"The evil genius be with you!" thought Goupil. "If ever I get them in my power," he said to

himself as he went out, "I will squeeze them like lemons."

By cultivating the society of the doctor, the justice of the peace, and the curé, Savinien proved the excellence of his character to them. The young man's love for Ursule, so devoid of all selfishness, and so persistent, so keenly interested the three friends, that they no longer separated these two children in their thoughts. Before long the monotony of this patriarchal life and the certainty of the lover's future ended by giving their affection an appearance of fraternity. The doctor often left Ursule and Savinien alone. He had well judged this charming young man, who would kiss Ursule's hand upon arriving and would not have asked her for it when they were alone, so much was he filled with respect for the innocence and simplicity of this child, whose excessive sensitiveness, often tested, had taught him that a harsh expression, a cold look, or the alternations of gentleness and roughness might kill her. Their greatest liberties the two lovers would be guilty of in the presence of the old men, in the evening. Two years, full of secret joys, passed in this way, with no other incident than the young man's futile attempts to obtain his mother's consent to his marriage with Ursule. He would sometimes talk for whole mornings together, his mother listening without answering his arguments and entreaties, except by the silence of a Bretonne or by refusals. At nineteen, Ursule, graceful, an excellent musician and well-educated,

had nothing more to acquire; she was perfect. She was also renowned far and wide for her beauty, grace and education. One day, the doctor had to refuse the Marquise d'Aiglemont, who thought of Ursule for her eldest son. Six months later, in spite of the profound secrecy observed by Ursule, the doctor, and Madame d'Aiglemont, Savinien accidentally heard of this circumstance. Touched by so much delicacy, he pleaded this proceeding in order to overcome his mother's obstinacy, her reply being:

"If the D'Aiglemonts wish to make a bad match, is that any reason why we should?"

In December, 1834, the pious, good old man visibly failed. When he was seen coming out of church, with his yellow, shriveled face and faded eyes, the whole town spoke of the old man's approaching death, he being then eighty-eight years old.

"You will know how matters stand," they said to the heirs.

In fact, the old man's demise possessed the attraction of a problem. But the doctor did not know he was ill, he labored under a delusion, and neither poor Ursule, nor Savinien, nor the justice of the peace, nor the curé, would through delicacy, enlighten him as to his situation; the Nemours doctor, who came to see him every night, was afraid to prescribe any further. Old Minoret felt no pain, he was gently dying. With him, the mind remained strong, clear and powerful. With old men thus constituted, the mind governs the body and gives it strength to die standing. The curé, for

fear of hastening the fatal end, excused his parishioner from coming to hear mass in church, and allowed him to read the services at home; for the doctor carefully fulfilled all his religious duties; the further he went toward the grave, the more he loved God. The eternal light more and more explained to him difficulties of all kinds. At the beginning of the new year, Ursule persuaded him to sell his carriage and horses, and to dismiss Cabirolle. The justice of the peace, whose anxiety about Ursule's future was far from being quieted by the old man's half-confidences, broached the delicate question of inheritance, by explaining one evening to his old friend the necessity of emancipating Ursule. The ward would then be able to receive a tutelary account and come into possession; which would operate to her advantage. In spite of this overture, the old man, who however had already consulted the justice of the peace, did not at all entrust him with the secret of his arrangements about Ursule; but he adopted the course of emancipation. The more the justice of the peace persisted in wishing to know the means his old friend had taken to enrich Ursule, the more suspicious grew the doctor. At last Minoret positively dreaded confiding to the justice of the peace his thirty-six thousand francs of stock to bearer.

"Why," said Bongrand, "do you risk any chance?"

"Between two chances," replied the doctor, "one avoids the most uncertain."

Bongrand conducted the matter of emancipation so quickly that it was finished on the day Mademoiselle Mirouët attained her twentieth year. This anniversary was to be the old doctor's last fête, and, seized no doubt with a presentiment of his coming end, he celebrated this day sumptuously by giving a small dance to which he invited all the boys and girls of the four families, Dionis, Crémière, Minoret and Massin. Savinien, Bongrand, the curé, his two curates, the Nemours doctor and Mesdames Zélie Minoret, Massin and Crémière, as well as Schmucke, were the guests at the big dinner which preceded the ball.

"I feel that I am going," said the old man to the notary at the close of the evening. "So I must beg you to come to-morrow to draw up the guardian's account that I must give Ursule, so as to avoid complicating my inheritance. Thank God! I have not wronged my heirs of a farthing, and have only disposed of my income. Messieurs Crémière, Massin, and Minoret, my nephew, are members of the family council appointed for Ursule, they will assist at this examination of accounts."

These words, overheard by Massin and hawked about the ballroom, spread joy amongst the three families, who for four years had been living in continual alternations, at one time believing themselves rich, at another disinherited.

"It is a *tongue* dying out," said Madame Crémière.

When, toward two in the morning, nobody was

left in the drawing-room but Savinien, Bongrand and the Abbé Chaperon, the old doctor pointed to Ursule, charming in her ball dress, who was just saying good-bye to the young Mesdemoiselles Crémière and Massin, and said:

"It is to you, my friends, that I entrust her! In a few days I shall no longer be here to protect her; stand, all of you, between her and the world, until she is married.—I am afraid for her!"

These words made a painful impression. The account, which was made up several days afterward in a family council, showed that Doctor Minoret was short ten thousand six hundred francs, partly as arrears of the stock receipt of fourteen hundred francs a year, the acquisition of which was accounted for by the employment of Captain de Jordy's legacy, and partly by the little capital of five thousand francs coming from gifts that, for fifteen years, the doctor had made to his ward on their respective fête-days or birthdays.

*

This authentic rendering of the account had been recommended by the justice of the peace, who dreaded the effects of Doctor Minoret's death, and who, unfortunately, was right. The day following the acceptance of the guardian's account which gave Ursule ten thousand six hundred francs and fourteen hundred francs a year, the old man was seized with an attack of faintness which compelled him to keep to his bed. In spite of the secrecy surrounding the doctor's house, the rumor of his death spread over the town, where the heirs ran through the streets like the beads of a chaplet of which the string has broken. Massin, who came to inquire, was told by Ursule herself that the old man was in bed. Unfortunately, the Nemours doctor had declared that the moment at which Minoret should take to his bed would be that of his death. From that time, in spite of the cold, the heirs stood in the streets, in the market-place or on their doorsteps, busy chattering about this long-expected event, and watching for the moment when the curé should carry the Sacrament to the old doctor with all the array in use in provincial towns. And so, when, two days after, the Abbé Chaperon, accompanied by his curate and the choir boys, preceded by the sexton bearing the cross, crossed the Grand'Rue, the heirs joined him in order to occupy the house, prevent all purloining

and put their greedy hands on presumable treasures. When the doctor, through the clergy, perceived his kneeling heirs, who, far from praying were watching him with eyes as keen as the gleam of a taper, he could not restrain a malicious smile. The curé turned round, saw them, and then said the prayers very slowly. The postmaster was the first to leave his tiring position, his wife followed him; Massin, fearing lest Zélie and her husband should lay their hands on some trifle, joined them in the drawing-room, and soon all the heirs were assembled there.

"He is too honest a man to steal the extreme unction," said Crémière, "so we can be quite easy."

"Yes, we shall each have about twenty thousand francs a year," replied Madame Massin.

"I have an idea," said Zélie, "that, for three years, he did not *invest* any more; he *loved* to hoard—"

"The treasure is no doubt in his cellar?" said Massin to Crémière.

"Provided that we find something," said Minoret-Levrault.

"But, after his declaration at the ball," cried Madame Massin, "there is no longer any doubt about it."

"In any case," said Crémière, "how shall we manage? Shall we share? shall we have an auction? or shall we divide by lots? for after all we are all of age."

A discussion, growing rapidly more and more

bitter, arose about the manner of proceedings. At the end of half-an-hour, a noise of confused voices, amongst which Zélie's shrill voice could be distinguished, resounded in the courtyard and reached the road.

"He must be dead," then said the busybodies collected in the road.

This uproar reached the ears of the doctor, who heard these words:

"But the house, the house is worth thirty thousand francs! I take it, I do, at thirty thousand francs!" cried or rather bellowed Crémière.

"Well, we will pay what it is worth," sharply replied Zélie.

"Monsieur le Curé," said the old man to the Abbé Chaperon, who stayed beside his friend after having administered to him, "arrange it so that I can die in peace. My heirs, like those of Cardinal Ximénès, are capable of pillaging my house before my death, and I have no monkey to set me up again. Go and tell them that I do not wish anyone to remain in the house."

The curé and the doctor went down, repeated the dying man's order, and in a fit of indignation, added strong words full of rebuke.

"Madame Bougival," said the doctor, "shut the gate and do not let anyone in; it seems that it is impossible to die in peace. You will prepare poultices of ground mustard, in order to apply them to monsieur's feet."

"Your uncle is not dead, and may yet live a long

time," said the Abbé Chaperon, dismissing the heirs, who had brought their children with them. He implores the deepest silence and will have no one but his ward near him. What a difference between this young girl's behavior and yours!"

"Old hypocrite!" cried Crémière, "I shall stand sentry. It is quite possible that there is some plot against our interests."

The postmaster had already disappeared into the garden, intending to watch his uncle with Ursule, and to have himself admitted into the house as an assistant. He returned stealthily without making the least noise with his boots, for the corridor and stairs were both carpeted. He was then able to reach the door of his uncle's room unheard. The curé and the doctor had gone, La Bougival was preparing the poultices.

"Are we quite alone?" said the old man to his ward.

Ursule stood on tiptoe to look into the courtyard.

"Yes," she said, "Monsieur le Curé has shut the gate himself in going out."

"My beloved child," said the dying man, "my hours, my minutes even, are numbered. I have not been a physician for nothing; the doctor's poultices will keep me alive till to-night. Do not cry, Ursule," he said, finding himself interrupted by his goddaughter's tears, "but listen to me carefully; it is a question of marrying Savinien. As soon as La Bougival comes up with the poultice, go down to

the Chinese pavilion, here is the key; raise the marble top of the Boule sideboard, and under it you will find a sealed letter addressed to you; take it, come back and show it to me, for I shall not die peacefully unless I see it in your hands. When I am dead, you are not to tell it at once; but send for Monsieur de Portenduère, you will read the letter together, and you must swear to me in your name and his to fulfil my last wishes. When he shall have obeyed me, you will announce my death, and the heirs' farce will begin. God grant that these monsters do not ill-treat you!"

"Yes, godfather."

The postmaster did not listen to the rest of the scene; he scampered away on tiptoe, remembering that the study lock was on the side of the library. He had been present at the time of the discussion between the architect and the locksmith, who declared that, if anyone were to get into the house by the window looking on to the river, it would be more prudent to put the lock on the side of the library, the study being intended as one of the pleasure-rooms in summer. Dazzled by self-interest and with the blood tingling in his ears, Minoret unscrewed the lock with a knife with all a thief's smartness. He entered the study, took the packet of papers without stopping to unseal it, re-screwed the lock, restored things in place, and went to sit down in the dining-room, waiting until La Bougival should have taken up the poultice before he left the house. He managed his flight all the more easily, as poor Ursule thought it more

important to see the poultice applied than to obey her godfather's orders.

"The letter! the letter!" cried the old man in dying tones, "obey me, here is the key. I want to see the letter in your hand."

These words accompanied such an agonized look, that La Bougival said to Ursule:

"But do what your godfather wishes, or you will kill him."

She kissed him on the forehead, took the key and went down; but, soon recalled by La Bougival's piercing cries, she rushed back. The old man took her in at a glance, saw her empty hands, sat up, tried to speak, and died with a last terrible gasp, his eyes wild with terror. The poor little one, who had never seen death before, fell on her knees and burst into tears. La Bougival closed the old man's eyes and arranged him in his bed. When, according to her expression, she had *dressed* the dead, the old nurse ran to tell Monsieur Savinien; but the heirs, who were at the end of the street, surrounded by on-lookers, just like crows waiting for the burial of a horse to come and scratch the earth and dig it out with their claws and beaks, ran up with the rapidity of birds of prey.

During these events, the postmaster had gone home to find out the contents of the mysterious package.

This is what he found:

TO MY DEAR URSULE MIROUËT, DAUGHTER OF MY NATURAL BROTHER-IN-LAW, JOSEPH MIROUËT, AND OF DINAH GROLLMAN.

"Nemours, January 15, 1830.

"MY LITTLE ANGEL,

"My paternal affection, which you have so thoroughly justified, has had as principle not only the vow I made your poor father to replace him; but still further your likeness to Ursule Mirouët, my wife, of whose grace, mind, sincerity and charm, you have incessantly reminded me. Your position as daughter of my father-in-law's natural son may render any testamentary arrangement made in your favor subject to dispute—

"The old scoundrel!" cried the postmaster.

"Your adoption would have been the cause of a lawsuit. Finally, I have always shrunk from the idea of marrying you to transmit my fortune to you; for I might have lived a long time and disturbed your future happiness, which is only delayed by Madame de Portenduère's life. These difficulties being thoroughly weighed, and wishing to leave you the fortune necessary to a happy life—

"The rascal, he has thought of everything!"

"Without injuring my heirs in any way—

"The Jesuit! as if he did not owe us all his fortune!"

"I have reserved for you the fruits of my savings of eighteen years, which I have constantly put out at interest through the care of my notary, with a view to making you as happy as is possible through riches. Without money

your education and your lofty ideas would cause you misfortune. Besides, you owe a handsome dowry to the charming young man who loves you. So you will find—in the middle of the third volume of the *Pandects*, in folio, bound in red morocco, which is the last volume in the first row, above the tablet of the library, in the last division on the salon side, three bonds of the three per cents, to bearer, of twelve thousand francs each—

"What depth of villainy!" cried the postmaster. "Ah! God will not allow me to be so defrauded."

"Take them at once, as well as the small arrears of savings up to the time of my death, and which will be in the preceding volume. Remember, my adored child, that you ought to blindly obey a thought which has formed the happiness of my whole life, and which will oblige me to ask the help of God, if you disobey me. But, in anticipation of any scruple of your dear conscience, which I know to be ingenious at self-torture, you will find herewith a will in due form of these bonds for the benefit of Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère. And so, whether you yourself possess them, or whether they come to you from him whom you love, they will be your lawful property.

"Your godfather,

"DENIS MINORET."

"To this was subjoined, on a square piece of stamped paper, the following document:

THIS IS MY WILL.

"I, Denis Minoret, doctor of medicine, residing at Nemours, of sound mind and body, as is shown by the date of this will, do bequeath my soul to God, praying him to pardon my long errors in favor of my sincere repentance. Then, knowing

that Monsieur le Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère has a genuine affection for me, I leave him thirty-six thousand francs in bonds of the three per cents, to be taken out of my inheritance, in preference to all my heirs.

"Made and written from beginning to end by my hand, at Nemours, the 11th January, 1831.

"DENIS MINORET."

Without hesitation, the postmaster who, in order to be quite alone, had shut himself into his wife's room, looked for the tinder box, and received two warnings from Heaven by the extinction of two matches that successively refused to strike. The third caught fire. He burnt the letter and the will in the fireplace. With unnecessary caution, he buried the remains of the paper and wax in the ashes. Then, tempted by the idea of possessing the thirty-six thousand francs unknown to his wife, he returned at double quick speed to his uncle's house, goaded by the only idea, a simple, clear idea, that could penetrate his thick skull. Seeing his uncle's house invaded by the three families who had at last made themselves masters of the place, he trembled lest he should be unable to accomplish a plan about which he did not allow himself time to reflect, whilst only thinking of the obstacles.

"What are you doing here?" he said to Massin and Crémière. "Do you think we are going to leave the house and valuables to be plundered? We are three inheritors, we cannot encamp here! Crémière, do hurry to Dionis and tell him to come and

testify to the decease. Although deputy-mayor, I cannot draw up my uncle's certificate of death.—You, Massin, go and ask old Bongrand to affix the seals.—And you, mesdames, keep Ursule company," he said to his wife, to Mesdames Massin and Crémière. "In this way nothing will be lost. Above all, shut the gate so that no one can go out!"

The women, who felt the propriety of this hint, ran to Ursule's room and found this noble creature, already so cruelly suspected, on her knees praying to God, her face streaming with tears. Minoret, guessing that the three heiresses would not stay long with Ursule, and fearing the suspicion of his co-heirs, went into the library, found the book, opened it, took the three bonds and found thirty bank notes in the other. In spite of his coarse nature, the giant fancied he could hear a peal of bells in each ear, and the blood hissed in his temples as he accomplished this theft. In spite of the severity of the season, his shirt clung to his back; at last his legs trembled to such an extent that he sank upon one of the salon sofas, as if a club had struck him on the head.

"Ah! how an inheritance loosens the great Minoret's tongue!" Massin said, as he rushed about the town. "Did you hear him?" he said to Crémière. "'Go here! go there!' as if he were drilling!"

"Yes, for a great big fool, he had a certain look—"

"Why," said Massin, alarmed, "his wife is there, they are two too many! You do the commissions, I am going back."

And so just as the postmaster was sitting down, he saw appearing at the gate the excited face of the justice's clerk, who was returning with all a weasel's speed to the dead man's house.

"Well, what is the matter?" asked the postmaster, going to let in his co-heir.

"Nothing; I have come back for the seals," replied Massin, darting the look of a wildcat at him.

"I wish they were already fixed, and we could all go home," rejoined Minoret.

"Faith! we will place a watchman over the seals," said the clerk. "La Bougival is capable of anything in the interests of the little humbug. We will get Goupil."

"Goupil?" said the postmaster. "He will take the money-box and we shall see nothing of it."

"Let me see!" rejoined Massin. "To-night, they will watch the dead, and we shall have finished affixing the seals in an hour's time; and so our wives will themselves guard them. To-morrow, at midday we shall have the funeral. We cannot proceed to the inventory for eight days."

"But," said the giant, smiling, "we will make the little humbug pack off, and we will put the mayor's drummer in charge of the seals and the house."

"Very well," cried the justice's clerk, "you must undertake this expedition, you are head of the Minorets."

"Mesdames, mesdames," said Minoret, "will you all please remain in the salon; it is not a question

of going to dinner, but of proceeding to the setting of the seals for the preservation of everybody's interests."

Then he took his wife aside to acquaint her with Massin's ideas in relation to Ursule. The women, whose hearts were full of revenge and who were longing to turn the tables on the little humbug, at once welcomed with enthusiasm the plan of expelling her.

Bongrand appeared and was indignant at the proposal made him by Zélie and Madame Massin that, in his character of the deceased man's friend, he should ask Ursule to leave the house.

"Go yourselves and turn her out of her father's, her godfather's, her uncle's, her benefactor's, her guardian's house! Go, you who only owe your inheritance to her nobleness of mind, take her by the shoulders and thrust her into the street, in front of the whole town! You believe her capable of robbing you? Well then, place a guard over the seals, you will be within your rights. But first know that I will not fix seals on her room; she is in her own home, all that is in it is her own property; I shall inform her of her rights, and shall tell her to there collect all that belongs to her—Oh! in your presence!" he added, hearing growls from the heirs.

"Heyday!" said the tax-collector to the postmaster and to the women, who were stupefied at Bongrand's choleric speech.

"There's a magistrate!" cried the postmaster.

Seated on a small sofa, half fainting, her head

thrown back her plaits undone, was Ursule, sobbing from time to time. Her eyes were dim, her lids swollen, in short, she was a prey to a moral and physical prostration which would have touched the most ferocious beings, except heirs.

"Ah! Monsieur Bongrand, after my birthday comes death and mourning!" she said, with the natural poetry of a beautiful mind. "You know what he was: for twenty years he never spoke a single impatient word to me! I thought he would live a hundred years! He has been a mother to me," she cried, "and a good mother!"

These few uttered thoughts brought on floods of tears, broken by sobs; then she subsided into a heap.

"My child," rejoined the justice of the peace, hearing the heirs on the staircase, "you have all your life before you for crying, and you have only a moment for your affairs; collect in your room all that belongs to you in this house. The heirs are forcing me to put seals—"

"Ah! the heirs can take everything," cried Ursule standing up in a fit of savage indignation. "All that is most precious I have here," she said, striking her bosom.

"And what is that?" asked the postmaster, who, with Massin, showed his dreadful face.

"The memory of his virtues, his life, of all his words, an image of his heavenly soul," she said, her eyes and face flashing, while she raised her hand with a magnificent gesture.

"And you have also a key!" cried Massin, creeping like a cat and seizing a key which Ursule's movement had dislodged from the folds of her bodice.

"That," she said, reddening, "is the key of his study, he was sending me there at the moment he died."

After having exchanged hideous smiles, the two heirs looked at the justice of the peace expressive of withering suspicion. Ursule, observing and guessing the meaning of this look, calculated with the postmaster, involuntary on the part of Massin, stood up on her feet, and turned as pale as if the blood were leaving her; her eyes darted that lightning which, it may be, only flashes at the cost of life, and she said, in a choking voice:

"Ah! Monsieur Bongrand, all that is in this room comes to me from my godfather's kindness, they may take all, I have only the clothes upon me, I will go out and never re-enter it again."

She went to her guardian's room, from which no entreaties could move her, for the heirs were a little ashamed of their behavior. She told La Bougival to engage two rooms for her at the inn of *La Vieille-Poste*, until she should have found some lodging in town where they could both live. She went back to her room to fetch her prayer-book, and remained all night with the curé, the curate and Savinien, praying and weeping. The nobleman came after his mother had gone to bed, and knelt down without a word beside Ursule, who gave him the saddest

smile while thanking him for so faithfully coming to share her sorrows.

"My child," said Monsieur Bongrand, bringing Ursule a bulky packet, "one of your uncle's heiresses has taken out of your cupboard all that you will want; for it will be a few days before the seals will be removed, and you will then recover whatever belongs to you. In your own interests, I have put the seals on your room."

"Thank you, monsieur," she replied, going to him and squeezing his hand. "Look at him once more; would you not think he was asleep?"

The old man at that moment had that bloom of transient beauty which rests on the faces of those who have died painlessly, he seemed radiant.

"Did he give you nothing secretly before dying?" whispered the justice of the peace to Ursule.

"Nothing," she said, "he only spoke of a letter—"

"Good! it will be found," rejoined Bongrand. "So it is very lucky for you that they insisted upon the seals."

At dawn, Ursule bade farewell to this house in which her happy childhood had been spent, and especially to the modest room where her love had commenced, and which was so dear to her that in the midst of her dismal grief she shed tears of regret for this peaceful, sweet abode. After having, for the last time, alternately contemplated her windows and Savinien, she went out to go to the inn, accompanied by La Bougival, who was carrying her bundle, by the justice of the peace, who gave her his

arm, and by Savinien, her gentle protector. And thus, in spite of the wisest precautions, the mistrustful lawyer found he was in the right; he was to see Ursule without a fortune and struggling with the heirs.

The next night, the whole town was present at the obsequies of Doctor Minoret. When the behavior of the heirs toward his adopted daughter was known, the great majority considered it natural and necessary; it was a question of an inheritance, the old man was *close;* Ursule might imagine she had rights, the heirs were defending their property, and besides, she had humiliated them enough during the life of their uncle, who used to receive them very badly. Désiré Minoret, who was not doing wonders in his situation, so said those who envied the postmaster, arrived for the service. Ursule was in bed, incapable of attending the funeral, the victim of a nervous fever caused as much by the insult of the heirs as by her deep affliction.

"Just look at that hypocrite crying!" said some of the heirs, pointing to Savinien, who was keenly grieved at the doctor's death.

"The point is whether he has reason to cry," observed Goupil. "Don't be in a hurry to laugh, the seals are not removed."

"Bah!" said Minoret, who knew what to think about that, "you have always frightened us for nothing."

Just as the funeral left the church for the cemetery, Goupil had to swallow a bitter draught; he

wanted to take Désiré's arm, but, by refusing it to him, the deputy disowned his friend in the presence of all Nemours.

"I must not get angry, or I should not be able to avenge myself any more," thought the head clerk, whose unfeeling heart swelled like a sponge in his bosom.

Before raising the seals and proceeding to the inventory, time was needed for the attorney for the crown, the legal guardian of orphans, to appoint Bongrand as his representative. The Minoret inheritance, which was talked about for ten days, was then examined, and was verified with all the strictness of legal formalities. Dionis got something by it, Goupil liked doing wrong well enough; and, as the speculation was a good one, the sittings multiplied. After the first sitting they nearly always breakfasted. The notary, the clerk, heirs and witnesses used to drink the rarest wines in the cellar.

*

In the provinces, and especially in the small towns where everyone possesses his own house, it is difficult enough to find lodgings. Moreover, in buying an establishment of any kind, the house nearly always forms part of the sale. The justice of the peace, to whom the attorney for the crown had entrusted the orphan's interests, saw no other way of removing her from the inn than by making her buy a little house in the Grand'Rue, at the corner of the bridge on the Loing, with the house-door opening on a passage, and having only one parlor on the ground floor with two windows looking on the street, and behind which there was a kitchen, with a French window looking on an inner court about thirty feet square. A small staircase lighted on the riverside by borrowed lights, led to the second story, composed of three rooms over which were two attics. The justice of the peace took two thousand francs out of La Bougival's savings to pay the first part of the cost of the house, which was worth six thousand francs, and he obtained terms for the remainder. In order to find room for the books Ursule wished to buy back, Bongrand had the inner partition of the two rooms on the second floor destroyed, after having noticed that the depth of the house corresponded to the length of the body of the library. Savinien and the justice of the peace so

hurried on the workmen who were cleaning, painting and renovating the little house, that, toward the end of March, the orphan was able to leave her inn, and discovered in this ugly house a room similar to the one from which the heirs had hunted her, for it was full of her own furniture that the justice of the peace had recovered at the raising of the seals. La Bougival, located above, could come down at the call of a bell placed at the head of her young mistress's bed. The room destined for the library, the ground-floor parlor and the kitchen, still empty, only stained, freshly papered and painted, were waiting for the purchases the goddaughter was to make at the sale of her godfather's furniture. Although they knew Ursule's character, the justice of the peace and the curé dreaded this sudden transition for her to a life devoid of the refinements and luxury to which the deceased doctor had insisted upon accustoming her. As to Savinien, he wept about it. And so he had secretly given the workmen and the upholsterer more than one compensation in order that Ursule should find no difference, at least in the interior, between the old and the new room. But the young girl, who derived all her happiness from Savinien's eyes, showed the gentlest resignation. In these circumstances, she enchanted her two old friends and proved to them, for the thousandth time, that heart sorrows only could make her suffer. The grief that the loss of her godfather caused her was too deep for her to feel the bitterness of this change of fortune, which, nevertheless, contributed

fresh obstacles to her marriage. She was so much hurt at Savinien's sadness at seeing her so reduced, that she was obliged to whisper to him, coming out from mass on the morning of her entry into her new house:

"Love does not thrive without patience, we will wait!"

As soon as the title deeds of the inventory were drawn up, Massin, by the advice of Goupil, who had changed over to him out of secret hatred for Minoret, hoping something better from the usurer's selfishness than from Zélie's cautiousness, sued Monsieur and Madame de Portenduère, whose payments had fallen due. The old lady was stunned at being called upon to pay one hundred and twenty-nine thousand five hundred and seventeen francs fifty-five centimes to the heirs at twenty-four hours' notice, and the interest from the day of the application, at the risk of seizure of her property. To borrow was impossible. Savinien went to consult a solicitor at Fontainebleau.

"You have to deal with bad people who will never compromise; they will prosecute unmercifully to get possession of the farm of Bordières," said the solicitor. "It would be best to convert the sale into a voluntary auction, so as to avoid expense."

This sad news crushed the old Bretonne, to whom her son mildly observed, that, had she consented to his marriage during Minoret's lifetime, the doctor would have given her estates to Ursule's husband. Their household would now have been in wealth

instead of poverty. Although uttered unreproachfully, this argument wounded the old lady quite as much as the idea of an early and violent dispossession. On learning this disaster, Ursule, barely recovered from the fever and the blow aimed at her by the heirs, was stupefied with grief. To love and find one's self powerless to succor the beloved one is one of the most frightful sufferings that can lay waste to the soul of a noble, delicate woman.

"I meant to have bought my uncle's house, I shall buy your mother's," she said.

"Is it possible?" said Savinien. "You are a minor and cannot sell your stock without formalities to which the attorney for the crown would never consent. Besides, we shall not attempt to resist. The whole town is delighted to see the discomfiture of a noble family. These bourgeois are like hounds at the death. Happily I still have ten thousand francs with which I shall be able to provide for my mother until the end of this wretched business. After all, your godfather's inventory is not finished; Monsieur Bongrand still hopes to find something for you. He is as astonished as I am to know that you are without any fortune. The doctor so often spoke, either to him or to me, of the beautiful future he had arranged for you, that we do not at all understand this issue."

"Bah!" she said, "as long as I can buy my godfather's library and furniture so that they shall not be scattered or fall into the hands of strangers, I am contented with my lot."

"But who knows what price these infamous heirs may not put on all you wish to have?"

From Montargis to Fontainebleau nothing was talked of but the Minoret heirs and the million they were looking for; but the most minute searches made in the house since the raising of the seals, had not led to any discovery. The Portenduère debt of a hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs, the fifteen thousand francs' income from the three per cents, then at seventy-six, and which gave a capital of three hundred and eighty thousand francs, the house, valued at forty thousand francs, and its rich furniture, produced a total of about six hundred thousand francs which seemed to everybody a sufficiently handsome compensation. Minoret then had several gnawing anxieties. La Bougival and Savinien, who, as well as the justice of the peace, persisted in believing in the existence of some will, used to arrive at the close of each sitting and ask Bongrand the result of the searches. Sometimes the old man's friend would exclaim, just as the men of business and the heirs were leaving: "I don't understand it at all!" As, to many superficial people, two hundred thousand francs made a fine provincial fortune for each heir, nobody thought of asking how the doctor had been able to keep up his style of household with only fifteen thousand francs, since he had left untouched the interest on the Portenduère debt. Bongrand, Savinien and the curé alone took up this question in Ursule's interest, and, by

expressing it, made the postmaster turn pale more than once.

"And yet they have searched everything thoroughly, they, in order to find money, I, to find a will which ought to be in Monsieur de Portenduère's favor," said the justice of the peace the day on which the inventory was closed. "They have scattered the cinders, raised the marbles, felt the slippers, pierced through the wooden beds, emptied the mattresses, pricked the blankets and quilts, turned out his eiderdown, examined the papers bit by bit, and the drawers, upset the floor of the cellar, and I urged them on to these devastations!"

"What do you think of it?" said the curé.

"The will has been suppressed by one of the heirs."

"And the papers?"

"Look for them then! Find out what you can of the ways of such sneaking, sly, miserly people as the Massins and the Crémières! How are you to thoroughly understand a fortune like Minoret's? he receives two hundred thousand francs of the inheritance, and they say he is going to sell his license, his house and his shares in the stage-coach, three hundred and fifty thousand francs.—What sums! without counting the savings of his thirty odd thousand francs income from landed property—Poor doctor!"

"Perhaps the will has been hidden in the library?" said Savinien.

"Therefore I do not dissuade the little one from

buying it! But for that, would it not be folly to let her put her ready money into books which she will never open?"

The whole town believed the doctor's goddaughter to have been provided with the hidden funds, but, when it became positively known that her income of fourteen hundred francs and her repurchases constituted her entire fortune, then the doctor's house and personal property excited universal curiosity. Some thought that sums in banknotes would be found hidden in the pieces of furniture; others, that the old man had lined his books. And so the sale presented the spectacle of strange precautions taken by the heirs. Dionis, acting as auctioneer, proclaimed every time an article was put up that the heirs only intended selling the piece of furniture and not any valuable it might contain; then, before surrendering it, they all submitted it to light-fingered examinations, having it probed and sounded; in fact, they followed it with the same look which a father would give to his only son on seeing him leave for the Indies.

"Ah! mademoiselle!" said La Bougival, in dismay upon her return from the first sitting, "I shall not go again. And Monsieur Bongrand is right, you would not be able to bear such a sight. Everything is out in the grounds. People come and go everywhere as if it were the street, the handsomest furniture is put to any use, *they* climb upon it, and a hen would not be able to find her chicks for the muddle! One would think one was at a fire.

The things are in the yard, the cupboards open, and nothing in them! Oh! the poor dear man, it was well he died, this sale would have killed him."

Bongrand, who bought for Ursule the pieces of furniture that the deceased had been fond of and that were calculated to adorn the little house, did not appear at all at the sale of the library. More cunning than the heirs, whose avidity might have made him pay too dear for the books, he had commissioned a dealer in second-hand books at Melun, who had purposely come to Nemours, and who had already had several lots knocked down to him. In consequence of the suspicion of the heirs, the library was sold in separate works. Three thousand volumes were examined, rummaged one by one, held up by both sides of the uplifted cover, and shaken in order to turn out any papers that might be hidden in them; finally their covers and fly-leaves were examined. The total of the auction, for Ursule, ran up to about six thousand five hundred francs, the half of her claim against the estate. The bookcase was not given up until after it had been carefully examined by a cabinet-maker sent for from Paris, who was celebrated for *secret* drawers. When the justice of the peace gave the order for the bookcase and the books to be conveyed to Mademoiselle Mirouët, the heirs felt vague misgivings, which vanished later on when she was seen to be as poor as before. Minoret bought his uncle's house, which his co-inheritors worked up to fifty thousand francs, thinking that

the postmaster was hoping to find a treasure in the walls. The conditions also contained reservations on this subject. A fortnight after the settlement of the inheritance, Minoret, having sold his horses and business to the son of a rich farmer, installed himself in his uncle's house, where he spent considerable sums in furniture and restorations. So in this way Minoret condemned himself to live a few steps away from Ursule.

"I hope," he had said at Dionis's the day that the formal notice had been served upon Savinien and his mother, "that we shall get rid of these lordlings! We will drive the others out afterward."

"The old woman with the fourteen quarterings," replied Goupil, "would never witness her own downfall; she will go and die in Brittany, where no doubt she will find a wife for her son."

"I do not think so," answered the notary, who, that morning, had drawn up the contract of the purchase made by Bongrand. "Ursule has just bought widow Richard's house."

"That cursed little fool does not know what to invent to annoy us!" cried the postmaster very rashly.

"And what does that matter to you, if she lives in Nemours?" asked Goupil, surprised at the movement of vexation that escaped the foolish giant.

"You don't know," replied Minoret, turning as red as a poppy, "that my son is idiotic enough to be in love with her. That is why I would willingly give a hundred *écus* if Ursule would leave Nemours."

From this first outburst, it will be understood how Ursule, poor and resigned, was going to annoy the wealthy Minoret. The worry of an inheritance to settle, the sale of his business, and the visits necessitated by unwonted affairs, his arguments with his wife about the slightest details and about the purchase of the doctor's house, in which Zélie wanted to live in a homely way in the interests of her son; this uproar, which contrasted with the quiet of his ordinary life, prevented the great Minoret from thinking of his victim. But, a few days after his installation in the Rue des Bourgeois, toward the middle of May, as he was returning from a walk, he heard the sound of the piano, saw La Bougival sitting at the window like a dragon guarding a treasure, and suddenly heard an importunate voice within him.

To explain why, in a man of the former postmaster's stamp, the sight of Ursule, who did not even suspect the theft committed to her injury, should become unbearable; why the sight of this dignity in misfortune inspired him with the desire to send this young girl out of the town; and why this desire assumed the character of hatred and passion, would perhaps form a whole treatise on ethics. Perhaps he did not think himself the lawful owner of the thirty-six thousand francs income so long as she to whom it belonged was two steps from him. Perhaps he had a vague belief in some chance that would disclose his theft whilst those whom he had robbed were there. Perhaps Ursule's

presence was awakening remorse in this somewhat primitive, almost gross nature, which up till now had never done anything illegal. Perhaps this remorse pricked him all the more because he had additional property legitimately acquired. He doubtless attributed this emotion to Ursule's presence alone, fancying that, if once the young girl disappeared, these tiresome troubles would also vanish. In short, perhaps crime has its doctrine of perfection. A beginning of evil must have its end, a first wound calls for the blow that kills. It may be that theft leads inevitably to murder. Minoret had committed the robbery without the least reflection, so rapidly had events succeeded each other; reflection came afterward. Now, if you have thoroughly grasped this man's physiognomy and appearance, you will understand the amazing effect that thought would produce upon him. Remorse is more than a thought, it springs from a feeling that is no more hidden than love, and that exercises the same tyranny. But, just as Minoret had not reflected in the least in seizing the fortune destined for Ursule, so he mechanically wished to drive her from Nemours when he felt himself injured by the sight of this deluded innocence. Following his character of an imbecile, he never thought at all of the consequences, but went from peril to peril, prompted by his covetous instinct like a wild animal which does not foresee any cunning of the hunter and relies upon its own speed and strength. Very soon, the rich bourgeois who used to meet at the house of

the notary Dionis remarked a change in the manners and attitude of this man who had formerly been so easy-going.

"I don't know what is the matter with Minoret, he is all *odd!*" said his wife, from whom he had resolved to hide his bold stroke.

Everybody attributed Minoret's weariness—for the thought reflected in his face was like that of weariness—to the entire cessation of any occupation, to the sudden change from an active to a private life. Whilst Minoret was considering how he could ruin Ursule's life, not a day went by without La Bougival's making some allusion to her foster daughter as to the fortune she ought to have had, or would compare her wretched condition to that which her late master had intended for her and of which he had spoken to her, La Bougival.

"After all," she said, "I am not saying this from any selfishness, but would not my late master, good as he was, have left me some little thing—?"

"Am I not here?" replied Ursule, forbidding La Bougival to say another word to her on this subject.

She did not want thoughts of self-interest to sully the kindly, mournful and sweet memories which went with the noble face of the old doctor, a sketch of whom, in black and white crayons, done by her drawing-master, adorned her little parlor. To her fresh and beautiful imagination, the sight of this sketch was always enough to bring back her godfather, whom she thought of ceaselessly, especially when she was surrounded by the things

he had been fond of; his big easy-chair à la duchesse, his study furniture and his backgammon table, as well as the piano he had given her. In the midst of these things almost quickened into life by her regrets, the two old friends remaining to her, the Abbé Chaperon and Monsieur Bongrand—the only persons she would receive—were like two living memories of her past life, to which she linked her present by the love that her godfather had blest. Before long, the sadness of her thoughts—insensibly softened—in some measure tinged the hours and bound all these things anew in indefinable harmony; there was exquisite cleanliness, the most precise symmetry in the arrangement of the furniture, a few flowers given every day by Savinien, elegant trifles, a hush that the young girl's habits communicated to objects and which made her home lovely. When breakfast and mass were over, she would study and sing; then she would embroider, sitting at her window overlooking the street. At four o'clock, Savinien, returning from the walk he used to take in all weathers, would find the window half-open, and would seat himself on the outer sill for a half-hour's chat with her. In the evening the curé and the justice of the peace used to visit her, but she never would allow Savinien to accompany them. In fact, she would not accept Madame de Portenduère's proposal, sent through her son, that Ursule should go to live with her. Moreover, the young girl and La Bougival lived in the strictest economy; altogether, they did not spend more than

sixty francs a month. The old nurse was indefatigable; she washed and ironed, she only cooked twice a week, she kept the cooked meat which the mistress and servant ate cold; for Ursule wanted to save seven hundred francs a year to pay the remainder of the price of her house. This sternness of conduct, modesty and resignation to a life of poverty and deprivation after having enjoyed a luxurious existence in which her slightest whims were doted upon, won over some people. Ursule won respect and incurred no gossip. Moreover, once satisfied, the heirs did her justice. Savinien admired this strength of character in so young a girl. From time to time, coming away from mass, Madame de Portenduère addressed a few kindly words to Ursule, she invited her twice to dinner and came herself to fetch her. If it was not yet happiness, at least it was tranquillity. But a success, in which the justice of the peace showed his old skill as a lawyer, caused the outburst of the yet secret persecution that Minoret was meditating against Ursule, and which was of the nature of a vow. As soon as all the business of the inheritance was finished, the justice of the peace, at Ursule's entreaty, took the Portenduères' cause in hand and promised her that he would extricate them from their difficulties; but, while visiting the old lady, whose opposition to Ursule's happiness made him furious, he did not leave her ignorant of the fact that he was devoting himself to her interests solely to please Mademoiselle Mirouët. He selected one of his

former clerks as solicitor at Fontainebleau, for the Portenduères, and himself conducted the inquiry into the nullity of the proceedings. He wanted to profit by the interval that should elapse between the annulment of the prosecution and Massin's fresh suit, to renew the lease of the farm at six thousand francs, to extract a premium from the farmers and the payment of the last year in advance. From that time, the whist party was reorganized at Madame de Portenduère's, between himself, the curé, Savinien and Ursule, whom Bongrand and the Abbé Chaperon used to call for and take home every evening. In June, Bongrand proclaimed the nullity of the proceedings pursued by Massin against the Portenduères. He immediately signed the fresh lease, obtained thirty-two thousand francs from the farmer, and a rental of six thousand francs for eighteen years; then, that evening, before his transactions could be noised abroad, he called upon Zélie, whom he knew to be puzzled as to how she should invest her funds, and proposed that she should purchase Les Bordières for two hundred and twenty thousand francs.

"I would close the bargain at once," said Minoret, "if I knew that the Portenduères would go and live elsewhere than in Nemours."

"But why?" replied the justice of the peace.

"We would like to dispense with nobility at Nemours."

"I think I have heard the old lady say that if her affairs were settled, she could not live anywhere but

in Brittany on what would remain to her. She talks of selling her house."

"Well then, sell it to me," said Minoret.

"But you talk as if you were master," said Zélie. "What do you want with two houses?"

"If I do not close with you to-night for Les Bordières," rejoined the justice of the peace, "our lease will be known, we shall be seized again in three days, and I shall fail in this settlement, which I am bent upon. So I shall go at once to Melun, where some farmers that I know there will buy Les Bordières without a moment's hesitation. In this way you will lose the chance of investing in land at three per cent on the estates of Rouvre."

"Well then, why did you come to see us?" said Zélie.

"Because you have the money, whilst my former clients would need several days to fork out one hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs. I don't want any difficulties."

"Let *her* leave Nemours and I will give them to you!" repeated Minoret.

"You understand that I cannot answer for the will of the Portenduères," replied Bongrand, "but I am sure that they will not remain in Nemours."

Upon this assurance, Minoret, nudged moreover by Zélie, promised the funds for paying the Portenduères' debt to the doctor's estate. The deed of sale was then drawn up at Dionis's, and in it the delighted justice of the peace got Minoret to accept the conditions of the new lease, the latter as well as

Zélie being a little late in discovering the loss of the last year paid in advance. Toward the end of June, Bongrand brought the adjusted balance of her fortune to Madame de Portenduère, one hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs, whilst urging her to invest it in the Funds, which with Savinien's ten thousand francs would give her an income of six thousand francs in the five per cents. Thus, far from losing on her income, the old lady gained two thousand francs a year by the settlement. And so the Portenduère family remained in Nemours.

Minoret believed he had been tricked, as if the justice of the peace could have known that Ursule's presence was unbearable to him, and he consequently entertained a keen resentment which increased his hatred of his victim. Then began the drama—secret, but terrible in its results—of the struggle between two feelings, the one urging Minoret to drive Ursule out of Nemours, and the one giving Ursule strength to bear the persecutions, the reason for which was for some time unfathomable; a strange situation, to which all the preceding events had led, for which they had paved the way, and to which they had served as a preface.

Madame Minoret, to whom her husband had given silverware and a complete dinner-service worth about twenty thousand francs, gave a gorgeous dinner every Sunday, upon which day her son the deputy used to bring a few friends from Fontainebleau. For these sumptuous dinners, Zélie would send to Paris for rarities, thus obliging the

notary Dionis to imitate her ostentation. Goupil, whom the Minorets were endeavoring to exclude from their society like some disreputable person who might sully their splendor, was not invited until toward the end of July, one month after the inauguration of the private life led by the former owners of the stage. The head clerk, already alive to this intentional neglect, was obliged to adopt formal manners toward Désiré, who, since the exercise of his duties, had assumed a solemn and supercilious manner even with his family.

"Then you have forgotten all about Esther, now that you are in love with Mademoiselle Mirouët?" said Goupil to the deputy.

"In the first place, Esther is dead, monsieur. Then, I have never thought about Ursule," replied the magistrate.

"Well then, what were you telling me, Papa Minoret?" cried Goupil very insolently.

Minoret, caught in the very act of lying by so formidable a man, would have been abashed but for the purpose for which he had invited Goupil to dinner, whilst recollecting the proposition once made by the head clerk, that he should prevent the marriage of Ursule and young Portenduère. For all answer, he hastily led the clerk to the far end of his garden.

"You will soon be twenty-eight, my dear fellow," he said, "and I do not yet see you on the road to good fortune. I wish you well, for after all you have been my son's friend. Listen to me: if you

induce little Mirouët—who possesses moreover forty thousand francs—to become your wife, as sure as my name is Minoret, I will give you the means to buy a notary's practice at Orléans."

"No," said Goupil, "I should not be conspicuous enough; but at Montargis—"

"No," retorted Minoret, "but at Sens—"

"Done! then it shall be Sens!" cried the hideous head clerk, "there is an archbishop there, I do not dislike a pious country; with a little hypocrisy one gets on better. Besides, the little one is religious, she would be a success there."

"It must be clearly understood," said Minoret, "that I only give the hundred thousand francs upon the marriage of our relation, whom I want to settle comfortably out of consideration for my dead uncle."

"And why not a little for my sake?" said Goupil slily, suspecting some secret in Minoret's behavior, "was it not through my directions that you were able to collect twenty-four thousand francs a year from one holding without enclave, round about the Chateau du Rouvre? With your grassland and mill on the other side of the Loing, you might add sixteen thousand francs! See here, old fellow, do you intend to deal fairly with me?"

"Yes."

"Well then, to let you feel my fangs, I was nursing the purchase of Le Rouvre, the parks, gardens, reserves and forest for Massin—"

"Take care how you do that!" broke in Zélie.

"Well then," said Goupil, darting a viperous look at her, "if I choose, Massin will have all that for two hundred thousand francs."

"Leave us, wife," then said the giant, taking Zélie's arm and sending her back, "I am settling with him.—We have been so busy," resumed Minoret returning to Goupil, "that we have not been able to think of you; but I count upon your friendship to procure us Le Rouvre."

"An old marquisate," said Goupil, slily, "and which in your hands would soon be worth fifty thousand francs a year, more than two millions at the present price of landed estate."

"And our deputy would then marry a field-marshal's daughter, or the heiress of some old family who would advance him in the magistracy of Paris," said the postmaster, opening his big snuff-box and offering Goupil a pinch.

"Well then, are we playing fair?" cried Goupil, flicking his fingers.

Minoret squeezed Goupil's hands and replied:

"On my word of honor!"

Happily for Minoret, the head clerk believed, like all crafty people, that his marriage with Ursule was an excuse for making up to him since he had set Massin against them.

"It is not he," he said to himself, "who thought of this humbug, I recognize my Zélie, she has dictated his rôle. Bah! I can let Massin go. Before three years are over I shall be deputy for Sens," he thought.

Then, perceiving Bongrand who was going to play whist opposite, he rushed into the street.

"You are very much interested in Ursule Mirouët, my dear Monsieur Bongrand," he said, "you cannot be indifferent to her future. Here is the programme: that she should marry a notary whose practice will be in a chief town of the district. This notary, who is bound to be deputy in three years, will bring her a dowry of one hundred thousand francs."

"She can do better," said Bongrand, drily. "Since her misfortunes, Madame de Portenduère has not been at all well; even yesterday she was terribly altered, sorrow is killing her; Savinien still has six thousand francs a year, Ursule has forty thousand francs, I shall have their capitals put out at interest à la Massin, but honestly, and in ten years they will have a small fortune."

"Savinien would be a fool; he can marry Mademoiselle du Rouvre when he pleases, an only daughter to whom her uncle and aunt intend to leave two magnificent legacies."

"'When Love lays hold upon us, good-bye to prudence,' says La Fontaine. But who is he, your notary? for after all—" rejoined Bongrand out of curiosity.

"I," replied Goupil, startling the justice of the peace.

"You?" answered Bongrand, without concealing his disgust.

"Ah well! your servant, monsieur," replied

Goupil, casting him a look full of malice, hatred and defiance.

"Would you like to be the wife of a notary who will bring you a dowry of one hundred thousand francs?" cried Bongrand, entering the little parlor and addressing Ursule, who was sitting beside Madame de Portenduère.

Moved by the same impulse, Ursule and Savinien started and looked at each other: she smiling, he not daring to show his anxiety.

"I am not mistress of my actions," replied Ursule, holding out her hand to Savinien without the old mother seeing this gesture.

"Therefore I refused without even consulting you."

"And why?" said Madame de Portenduère. "It seems to me, my child, that a notary's is a fine position?"

"I prefer my peaceful poverty," she replied, "for, compared to what I might have expected from life, it is wealth to me. Besides, my old nurse saves me many worries, and I am not going to exchange the present, which satisfies me, for an unknown future."

*

The next day, the post shed the poison of two anonymous letters into two hearts; one was to Madame de Portenduère, the other to Ursule. This is the one received by the old lady:

"You love your son, you want to establish him as befits the name he bears, and you encourage his fancy for a penniless and ambitious young girl, by receiving at your house one Ursule, daughter of a military bandsman; whilst you could marry him to Mademoiselle du Rouvre, whose two uncles, Messieurs le Marquis de Ronquerolles and the Chevalier du Rouvre, each possessing thirty thousand francs a year, intend to settle it upon their niece in her marriage contract so as to avoid leaving their fortune to that old fool, Monsieur du Rouvre, who squanders everything. Madame de Sérizy, Clémentine du Rouvre's aunt, who has just lost her only son in the Algerian campaign, will doubtless also adopt her niece. Some one who wishes you well believes that Savinien would be accepted."

This is the letter written to Ursule:

"DEAR URSULE,

"In Nemours there is a young man who worships you, who cannot see you working at your windows without an emotion which proves to him that his love is for life. This young man is gifted with a will of iron and a perseverance that nothing discourages; so receive his love favorably, for he has none but the purest intentions, and humbly asks for your hand in the desire of making you happy. His fortune, though already suitable, is nothing compared to that which he will give you when you are his wife. One day you will be received at

Court as the wife of a minister, and one of the highest in the land. As he can see you every day without your being able to see him, put one of La Bougival's pots of carnations in the window; in this way you will have told him that he may call."

Ursule burnt this letter without mentioning it to Savinien. Two days after she received another letter, thus worded:

"You were wrong, dear Ursule, not to answer him who loves you better than his life. You think you will marry Savinien, but you deceive yourself strangely. This marriage will never take place, Madame de Portenduère, who will no longer receive you at her house, is going this morning to Rouvre, on foot, in spite of the condition of suffering she is in, to ask the hand of Mademoiselle du Rouvre for Savinien. Savinien will finally yield. How can he object? the young lady's uncles are securing their fortune on their niece by settlement. This fortune consists of sixty thousand francs a year."

This letter devastated Ursule's heart by teaching her the tortures of jealousy, a suffering hitherto unknown, which, in an organization so fine and sensitive to pain, clouded the present, future and even the past with grief. From the moment she had this fatal paper, she remained in the doctor's armchair, her gaze fixed upon space, lost in a sorrowful dream. In one instant she felt the chill of death instead of the ardor of glorious life. Alas! it was worse: in reality it was the cruel awakening of the dead finding that there is no God, the masterpiece of that singular genius called Jean-Paul. Four times

La Bougival tried to make Ursule eat her breakfast, and saw her take up the bread and leave it, unable to carry it to her lips. When she ventured a remonstrance, Ursule answered her with a gesture of the hand and one terrible "Hush!" spoken as despotically as her tone had hitherto been gentle. La Bougival, who was watching her mistress through the glass window of the door of communication, observed that she was alternately as burning red as the fever that consumed her, and as violet as the chill that followed the fever. This condition grew worse about four o'clock, when Ursule got up every moment to see if Savinien was coming or not coming. Jealousy and doubt strip love of all bashfulness. Ursule, who would not hitherto have allowed her passion to be betrayed by a gesture, put on her hat, her little shawl, and rushed out into her corridor to go and meet Savinien, but some remnant of modesty forced her back into her little parlor. There she wept. When the curé called in the evening, the poor nurse stopped him on the threshold.

"Ah! Monsieur le Curé, I don't know what is the matter with mademoiselle; she—"

"I know," replied the priest sadly, thus silencing the frightened nurse.

The Abbé Chaperon then told Ursule what she had not dared ascertain. Madame de Portenduère had gone to dine at Le Rouvre.

"And Savinien?"

"Also."

Ursule gave a nervous start which made the Abbé

Chaperon shiver as if he had received the discharge of an electrical jar, and moreover felt himself strongly stirred to the heart.

"And so we shall not go to her house to-night," said the curé, "but, my child, you would do well not to go there any more. The old lady would receive you in such a way as to hurt your pride. We who had led her to listen to the mention of your marriage do not know from whence blows the wind which has changed her all in a moment."

"I am prepared for everything, and am no longer astonished at anything," said Ursule in tones of conviction. "In extremes of this kind it is a great consolation to feel that one has not offended God."

"Submit yourself, my dear daughter, without searching out the ways of Providence," said the curé.

"I do not wish to suspect Monsieur de Portenduère's character unjustly—"

"Why do you no longer call him Savinien?" asked the curé, who observed some slight bitterness in Ursule's accents.

"My dear Savinien's," she resumed, weeping. "Yes, my kind friend," she continued, sobbing, "a voice keeps telling me that his heart is as noble as his blood. Not only has he confessed to me that he loved me above everything, but he has proved it to me by infinite delicacy and by heroically restraining his ardent passion. When he recently took the hand that I held out to him when Monsieur Bongrand was suggesting that notary as a husband for

me, I swear to you it was the first time I had ever given it to him. If he began with a joke in sending me a kiss across the street, his affection since then has never, as you know, gone beyond the strictest bounds; but I may tell you who can read my soul—save for the corner which is kept for the angels' eyes—that this feeling is the element of many a merit to me; it has enabled me to accept my misfortunes, it has perhaps softened the bitterness of the irreparable loss which I mourn by my dress rather than in my heart! Oh! I have been wrong! Yes, love in me was stronger than my gratitude toward my godfather, and God has avenged him. How could it be helped! I respected myself as Savinien's future wife; I was too proud, and it may be that God has punished that pride. God alone, as you have told me, ought to be the beginning and the end of our actions."

The curé was touched at the tears rolling down her face, already growing pale. The more the poor girl seemed secure, the more she failed.

"But," she continued, "once I return to my orphaned condition I shall be able to resume the feelings. After all, could I be a stone round the neck of the man I love? What could he do here? Who am I to aspire to him? Besides, do I not love him with so divine a love that it would go as far as the entire sacrifice of my happiness and hopes?—And you know I have often reproached myself for founding my love upon a grave, for knowing it to be deferred until after this old lady's death. If

Savinien is made happy and rich by another, I have just enough to pay my dowry to the convent which I shall enter at once. There should no more be two loves in a woman's heart than there are two Masters in Heaven. A religious life would have attractions for me."

"He could not let his mother go alone to Le Rouvre," said the good priest gently.

"Do not let us talk any more about it, my kind Monsieur Chaperon; I shall write to him to-night to set him free. I am delighted to have to shut up the windows of this parlor."

And she informed the old man of the anonymous letters whilst telling him that she would not encourage her unknown lover's advances.

"Ah! it is an anonymous letter which has induced Madame de Portenduère to go to Le Rouvre," cried the curé, "there is no doubt that you are being persecuted by wicked people."

"But why? Neither Savinien nor I have done harm to anyone, and we are not injuring anybody's interests here."

"Well, little one, we will take advantage of this explosion which has broken up our party, to arrange our poor friend's library. The books are in a heap; Bongrand and I will put them in order, for we mean to search amongst them. Put your trust in God; but remember also that you have two devoted friends in the kind justice of the peace and myself."

"That is a great deal," she said, accompanying

the curé as far as the threshold of the entrance, stretching her neck like a bird looking out of its nest, still hoping to see Savinien.

Just then, Minoret and Goupil, returning from some walk in the fields, stopped in passing, and the doctor's heir said to Ursule:

"What is the matter with you, cousin? for we are always cousins, are we not? You seem altered."

Goupil was casting such ardent looks at Ursule that she was frightened; she went in without replying.

"She is shy," said Minoret to the curé.

"Mademoiselle Mirouët is quite right not to talk to men on her doorstep; she is too young—"

"Oh!" said Goupil, "you must know that she does not lack lovers."

The curé had hastened to bow and was hurriedly walking toward the Rue des Bourgeois.

"Well!" said the head clerk to Minoret, "it is brewing! She is already as white as death; but, in a fortnight, she will have left the town. You will see."

"It's better to have you for a friend than an enemy," cried Minoret, startled by the cruel smile which gave Goupil's face the diabolical expression ascribed by Joseph Bridau to Goethe's Mephistopheles.

"I should think so," replied Goupil. "If she does not marry me I will kill her with sorrow."

"Do this, young man, and I *give* you the funds to become a notary in Paris. You will then be able to marry a rich woman—"

"Poor girl! What has she done to you then?" asked the clerk, surprised.

"She bores me!" said Minoret roughly.

"Wait till Monday, and then you shall see how I will pester her," rejoined Goupil, examining the old postmaster's countenance.

The next day, the old Bougival went to Savinien's and said, holding out a letter:

"I do not know what the dear child has written to you, but she is like a corpse this morning."

From this letter to Savinien cannot one imagine the sufferings that had beset Ursule during the night?

"MY DEAR SAVINIEN,

"I have been told that your mother wishes you to marry Mademoiselle du Rouvre, and perhaps she is right. You are now between a life of what is almost poverty and a life of wealth, between the fiancée of your heart and a society wife, between obedience to your mother's and your own choice, for I still believe that you have chosen me. Savinien, if you have any determination to make, I want it to be made in all freedom; I give you back the word you gave, not to me, but to yourself at a moment which will never fade from my memory, and which, like all the days that have followed since, was of angelic purity and sweetness. This remembrance is enough for my lifetime. Were you to persist in your vow, my happiness would hereafter be troubled by a dark and terrible idea. In the midst of our privations, now so cheerfully borne, you might, later on, think to yourself that, had you followed the dictates of the world, all might have been very different for you. Were you the man to give utterance to this thought, it would mean to me the sentence of a miserable death; and, did you not say it, I should suspect the slightest cloud that

might darken your forehead. Dear Savinien, I have always liked you better than anyone else upon earth. And I might, since my godfather, although he was envious, used to say: 'Love him, child! you will surely belong to each other some day.' When I went to Paris I loved you hopelessly, and that feeling contented me. I do not know if I can return to it, but I shall try. After all, what are we at this moment? Brother and sister. Let us remain so. Marry this fortunate girl, who will have the joy of giving your name the lustre it should have, and which, according to your mother, I should diminish. You will never hear of me again. The world will commend you, and I shall never blame you and shall always love you. So good-bye."

"Wait!" cried the young man.

He motioned to La Bougival to sit down and he scrawled these few words:

"MY DEAR URSULE,

"Your letter breaks my heart, because you have needlessly given yourself much pain, and because, for the first time, our hearts have ceased their understanding. If you are not my wife it is because I cannot yet marry without my mother's consent. After all, is not eight thousand francs a year in a pretty cottage on the banks of the Loing a fortune? We calculated that with La Bougival we should save five thousand francs a year! One night, in your uncle's garden, you allowed me to look upon you as my fiancée, and you by yourself cannot break our mutual bonds. Need I tell you that yesterday I plainly told Monsieur du Rouvre that even if I were free I would not accept my fortune from a young woman whom I did not know. My mother refuses to see you again, I lose the happiness of our evenings, but do not curtail the short time I speak to you at your window. Till to-night. Nothing can separate us."

"Go, old friend. She must not be anxious one moment too long—"

That evening at four o'clock, returning from the daily walk he took on purpose to pass Ursule's house, Savinien found his mistress somewhat pale from such sudden upsets.

"It seems to me I have never known till now what pleasure it is to see you," she said to him.

"You once said to me," replied Savinien, smiling, "for I remember all your words, that 'Love does not thrive without patience, I will wait!' Then, dear child, have you divided love from faith? Ah! this is the end of all our quarrels. You declared you loved me better than I love you. Have I ever doubted you?" he asked, offering her a nosegay of wild flowers so arranged as to convey his thoughts.

"You have no reason to doubt me," she replied, "and besides, you do not know all," she added in a troubled voice.

She had refused all letters from the post. But, without her being able to guess by what witchcraft the thing had happened, a few moments after the departure of Savinien, whom she had watched turning from the Rue des Bourgeois into the Grand'Rue, she had found a paper on her armchair on which was written: "*Tremble! the despised lover will be worse than a tiger.*" In spite of Savinien's entreaties she refused, through caution, to confide the terrible secret of her fear to him. It was only the unspeakable pleasure of seeing Savinien again after having thought she had lost him that could make her forget the deadly

chill which had just seized her. To everybody it is horrible torture to wait for indefinite calamity. Suffering then assumes the proportions of the unknown, which is certainly the infinite of the soul. But, to Ursule, it was the very greatest misery. She inwardly experienced fearful starts at the slightest noise, she mistrusted silence, and suspected her walls of complicity. At last her peaceful sleep became disturbed. Goupil, completely ignorant of the flower-like delicacy of such a constitution, had yet through the instinct of evil, discovered the poison that was to blight and kill her. And yet, the following day passed without any surprise. Ursule played the piano very late and went to bed almost reassured and overcome with sleep. About midnight, she was awakened by a concert composed of a clarionette, a hautboy, a flute, a cornopean, a trombone, a bassoon, a flageolet and a triangle. All the neighbors were at the windows. The poor child, already startled at seeing people in the road, received a terrible shock upon hearing a man's hoarse, vulgar voice crying:

"For pretty Ursule Mirouët from her lover!"

The next day, Sunday, the whole town was in an uproar, and as Ursule entered and left the church she saw numerous groups in the market-place gossiping about her and evincing a horrible curiosity. The serenade set all tongues going, for everyone was lost in conjecture. Ursule reached her house more dead than alive and did not go out again, the curé having advised her to say vespers at home.

Upon entering she saw a letter slipped under the door of the brick-tiled corridor leading from the road into the yard; she picked it up, and read it, impelled by the desire to find some explanation within. The least sensitive of beings can imagine what she must have felt upon reading these awful lines:

"Make up your mind to become my wife, rich and adored. I want you. If I do not have you alive I will have you dead. To your refusal you may attribute the misfortunes which will overtake none but yourself.

"From him who loves you and to whom you will belong some day."

Strange! at the very moment that the gentle, tender victim of this plot was crushed like a broken flower, Mesdemoiselles Massin, Dionis and Crémière were envying her lot.

"She is very lucky," they were saying. "Everyone is thinking about her, her fancies are flattered, and she is being discussed! From what they say the serenade must have been charming! There was a cornopean!"

"What is a cornopean?"

"A new instrument! look here, as big as this," said Angéline Crémière to Paméla Massin.

In the morning Savinien had gone as far as Fontainebleau trying to find out who had asked for the bandsmen from the regiment in garrison; but, as there were two men to each instrument, it was impossible to recognize those who had gone to Nemours. The colonel gave orders forbidding the

bandsmen to play for private persons without his permission. The young nobleman had an interview with the Attorney for the Crown, Ursule's guardian, and explained to him the seriousness of such scenes for so delicate and frail a young girl, whilst begging him to discover the author of this serenade through all the means at the disposal of the courts. Three days after, in the middle of the night, three violins, a flute, a guitar and a hautboy gave a second serenade. This time, the musicians fled in the direction of Montargis, where there happened to be a company of comedians at that time. A harsh, intoxicated voice had cried between two pieces:

"To the daughter of the bandmaster Mirouët!"

In this way all Nemours learnt the profession of Ursule's father, the secret so carefully guarded by old Doctor Minoret.

This time Savinien did not go to Montargis. During the day he received an anonymous letter from Paris, in which he had read this horrible prophecy:

"You will not marry Ursule. If you want her to live, make haste to yield her to one who loves her more than you do; for he has turned musician and artist to please her, and would rather see her dead than know her to be your wife."

At that time the Nemours doctor came three times a day to see Ursule, whom these occult persecutions had placed in peril of death. Feeling herself thrust into a slough by some infernal hand, this sweet young girl maintained a martyr's attitude;

she remained in profound silence, raised her eyes to Heaven and wept no more; she was awaiting fresh shocks with fervent prayers and intercessions for him who was dealing death to her.

"I am glad not to be able to go down to the parlor," she said to Messieurs Bongrand and Chaperon, who left her as little as possible, "*he* would come, and I feel I am unworthy of the looks with which *he* always blesses me! Do you think he doubts me?"

"Why, if Savinien does not discover the author of these infamies, he intends going to demand the interference of the police in Paris," said Bongrand.

"The unknown must know that I am wounded to death," she replied, "they will stay quiet."

The curé, Bongrand and Savinien were lost in conjecture and supposition. Savinien, Tiennette, La Bougival and two persons devoted to the curé turned spy and were on their guard for a week; but Goupil, who was plotting alone, was not to be betrayed by any indiscretion. The justice of the peace was the first to think that the author of the mischief was afraid at his own work. Ursule was growing as white and feeble as consumptive young English girls. Everyone relaxed his attention. There were no more serenades or letters. Savinien attributed the abandonment of these obnoxious means to the secret investigations of the public prosecutor, to whom he had sent the letters received by Ursule, by his mother and himself. This truce did not last long. One morning, toward the middle

of July, when the doctor had checked Ursule's nervous fever, and just when she was plucking up courage once more, a rope-ladder was found fastened to her window. The postilion who had driven the night mail declared that a little man was about to climb down just as he was passing; and that, in spite of his desire to stop, his horses—having started down the incline of the bridge at whose corner Ursule's house stood—had carried him well on beyond Nemours. One opinion originating in the Dionis circle attributed these manœuvres to the Marquis du Rouvre, then in great difficulties, Massin having bills of exchange upon him, and who, by the speedy marriage of his daughter to Savinien would, so it was said, preserve his château Du Rouvre from his creditors. It was said that Madame de Portenduère was delighted at anything that could expose, discredit or disgrace Ursule; but, in the presence of this early death, the old lady found herself almost vanquished. The Curé Chaperon was so keenly affected by this last trick, that he felt sufficiently ill to remain at home for a few days. Poor Ursule, who had suffered a relapse from this odious attempt, received a letter from the curé through the post, which they had not refused upon recognizing the handwriting:

"MY CHILD,

"Leave Nemours, and so defeat the malice of your unknown enemies. Perhaps they are trying to endanger Savinien's life. I will tell you more when I am able to go and see you."

This note was signed: *Your devoted* CHAPERON.

When Savinien, almost beside himself, went to see the curé, the poor priest read the letter over and over, so horrified was he at the perfection with which his writing and signature had been copied; for he had not written at all, and, had he written, he would not have made use of the post to send his letter to Ursule. The deadly condition to which this last atrocity reduced Ursule drove Savinien to apply once more to the public prosecutor while taking him the curé's forged letter.

"A murder is being committed through means for which the law has in no way provided, and upon an orphan whom the Code has entrusted to you as a ward," said the nobleman to the magistrate.

"If you discover the means of repression," replied the public prosecutor, "I will adopt them; but I do not know of any! The anonymous villain has given the best advice. Mademoiselle Mirouët must be sent here to the nuns of the Adoration du Saint-Sacrement. In the meanwhile, at my request, the superintendent of the police at Fontainebleau will authorize you to bear arms for your defence. I went myself to Le Rouvre, and Monsieur du Rouvre was very justly indignant at the suspicions hovering over him. Minoret, my deputy's father, is bargaining with him for his château. Mademoiselle du Rouvre is to marry a rich Polish count. In fact, Monsieur du Rouvre was leaving the country the very day upon which I went there, in order to avoid the execution of an arrest."

Désiré, questioned by his chief, did not dare to express his thoughts; he recognized Goupil! Goupil alone was capable of carrying on any action which skirted the penal code without falling over the precipice of any one article. Impunity, secrecy and success increased Goupil's audacity. The terrible clerk compelled Massin, now his dupe, to persecute the Marquis du Rouvre, so as to force the nobleman to sell the remainder of his estate to Minoret. After having entered into negotiations with a notary at Sens, he resolved to attempt a final stroke to obtain Ursule. He meant to imitate two or three young men in Paris who owed their wives and their fortunes to abduction. The services rendered to Minoret, Massin and Crémière, and the protection of Dionis, Mayor of Nemours, would enable him to hush up the affair. He immediately decided to throw off the mask, believing Ursule to be incapable of resisting him in the state of weakness to which he had reduced her. Nevertheless, before risking the last stroke of his ignoble scheme, he deemed it necessary to have an explanation at Le Rouvre, where he accompanied Minoret, who was going there for the first time since the signing of the contract. Minoret had just received a confidential letter in which his son asked for information as to what was happening about Ursule, before coming himself with the public prosecutor to take her to a convent, in order to protect her from any fresh outrage. The deputy begged his father, in the event of this persecution being the work of one of their

friends, to give such a one some good advice. If justice could not always punish, she would end by knowing all and would keep good account. Minoret had reached a great goal. Henceforth indisputable proprietor of the Château du Rouvre, one of the finest in Le Gâtinais, he combined an income of forty odd thousand francs, with beautiful and rich estates around the park. The colossus could defy Goupil. In fact, he expected to live in the country, where the recollection of Ursule would not trouble him any more.

"My boy," he said to Goupil as he was walking up and down the terrace, "leave my cousin in peace!"

"Bah!" said the clerk, unable to make anything of this odd behavior, for stupidity also has its depths.

"Oh! I am not ungrateful; you got me this fine château of brick and cut stone for two hundred and eighty thousand francs such as nowadays could not be built for two hundred thousand crowns, the château farm, the preserves, the park, the gardens and woods—Well, then—yes, upon my word! I will give you ten per cent, twenty thousand francs, with which you can buy an attorney's practice in Nemours. I guarantee your marriage with one of the little Crémières, the eldest."

"The one who talks of the cornopean?" cried Goupil.

"But my cousin will give her thirty thousand francs," returned Minoret, "you see, my boy, you

are born to be an attorney as I was made to be a postmaster, and one must always follow one's vocation."

"Well then," rejoined Goupil, his hopes shattered, "here are the stamps, sign acceptances for twenty thousand francs so that I can lay the money down."

Minoret had the half-yearly eighteen thousand francs coming in from the bonds about which his wife did not know; in this way he thought he could get rid of Goupil, and signed. The head clerk, seeing the foolish and colossal Machiavel of the Rue des Bourgeois in a fit of seigniorial fever, threw him an "Au revoir!" as a farewell and a look which would have terrified any but a silly parvenu gazing from the height of a terrace upon the gardens and magnificent roofs of a château built in the style in vogue under Louis XIII.

"Are you not going to wait for me?" he cried, seeing Goupil walking off.

"You will meet me again in your path, *papa!*" replied the future attorney, thirsting for revenge and longing to find out the key of the riddle presented to his mind by the strange zigzags of fat Minoret's behavior.

*

From the day upon which the most infamous calumny had sullied her life, Ursule, a victim to one of those unaccountable illnesses that have their seat in the soul, was rapidly traveling toward Death. Extremely pale, speaking a few slow and feeble words at rare intervals only, casting looks of gentle indifference, everything about her, even her brow, betrayed one devouring thought. She believed that the ideal wreath of pure flowers which, at all times, people have thought to see on a virgin's head, had fallen. In the silence and space she was listening to the shameful gossip, the spiteful comments and chuckles of the little town. The burden was too heavy for her, and her innocence was too delicate to survive such bruises. She did not complain, a mournful smile was always on her lips, and her eyes were often raised to Heaven as if appealing from man's injustice to the Lord of angels. When Goupil got back to Nemours, Ursule had been carried from her room to the ground-floor in the arms of La Bougival and the doctor of Nemours. A great event was taking place. After having learnt that this young girl was dying like an ermine, and furthermore that her honor was less harmed than was Clarissa Harlowe's, Madame de Portenduère was coming to see her and comfort her. The sight of her son, who had spent the whole of the preceding

night threatening to kill himself, had unbent the old Bretonne. Moreover, Madame de Portenduère thought it befitting her dignity to give courage to so pure a young girl, and saw that her visit would counterbalance all the harm done by the little town. Her opinion, which was doubtless more powerful than that of the common herd, would establish the power of the nobility. This overture, announced by the Abbé Chaperon, had worked a revolution in Ursule and revived hope in the disheartened doctor, who was talking of calling for a consultation with the most celebrated doctors in Paris. Ursule had been put in her guardian's armchair, and such was the character of her beauty that, in her mourning and suffering she looked more beautiful than at any period of her happy life. When Savinien appeared with his mother on his arm, the young invalid recovered a brilliant color.

"Do not get up, my child," said the old lady in an imperious tone: "ill and feeble as I am myself, I wanted to come and see you to tell you my opinion of what is happening; I consider you the purest, holiest, and most charming girl of the Gâtinais, and think you are worthy of constituting a nobleman's happiness."

At first Ursule could not answer; she took the withered hands of Savinien's mother and kissed them while covering them with tears.

"Ah! madame," she replied in a weakened voice, "I should never have had the boldness to think of raising myself above my station had I not been

encouraged by promises, and my only claim was an unbounded affection; but they have found means to separate me forever from him whom I love; they have made me unworthy of him.—Never!" she said, with a sound in her voice which struck the spectators painfully, "never will I consent to give to anyone, no matter who it may be, a degraded hand, a tarnished reputation. I loved too much—I may confess it in my present state—I love a human creature almost as much as God. And so God—"

"Come! come! my dear, do not slander God! Come, my *daughter*," said the old lady, making an effort, "do not exaggerate the importance of an infamous joke in which nobody believes. I promise you, you will live and you will be happy."

"You will be happy!" said Savinien, kneeling in front of Ursule and kissing her hands, "my mother has called you '*my daughter.*' "

"That will do," said the doctor, who came to feel his invalid's pulse, "do not kill her with joy."

At that moment, Goupil, finding the entrance door ajar, pushed that of the little parlor and showed his ugly face excited with the thoughts of vengeance that had been flourishing in his heart while on his way.

"Monsieur de Portenduère!" he said in a voice like the hissing of a snake that is driven into its hole.

"What do you want?" replied Savinien, rising.

"I want a word with you."

Savinien went out into the passage, and Goupil led him into the little yard.

"Swear to me, on the life of Ursule whom you love, and on your nobleman's honor that you think so much of, that you will act as if I had never told you what I am about to tell you, and I will enlighten you as to the cause of the persecutions directed against Mademoiselle Mirouët."

"Can I stop them?"

"Yes."

'Can I avenge them?"

"On the author, yes: but on the instrument, no."

"Why not?"

"Well—the instrument is myself—"

Savinien turned pale.

"I have just caught a glimpse of Ursule—" continued the clerk.

"Ursule?" said the nobleman, looking at Goupil.

"Mademoiselle Mirouët," rejoined Goupil, rendered respectful by Savinien's tone, "and I would like to atone with my blood for all that has been done. I am sorry—If you were to kill me in a duel or any other way, what good would my blood do you? Would you drink it? It would poison you at this moment."

This man's cool reasoning and his own curiosity subdued Savinien's boiling blood; he fixed this quasi-hunchback with a look that forced him to lower his eyes.

"Then who employed you?" said the young man.

"Will you swear?"

"Do you want to be sure nothing will be done to you?"

"I want you and Mademoiselle Mirouët to forgive me."

"She will forgive you, but I, never!"

"Well then, you will forget?"

What awful power reasoning possesses when backed by interest! Two men, one longing to rend the other, were there, in a small courtyard, a finger's breadth from each other, forced into conversation, united by the selfsame feeling.

"I might forgive you, but I should not forget."

"That won't do," said Goupil, coldly.

Savinien lost patience. He gave his face a slap which re-echoed in the courtyard, nearly upset Goupil, and made him stagger himself.

"I only get what I deserve," said Goupil, "I committed a piece of folly. I believed you to be nobler than you are. You have abused an advantage I gave you—you are now in my power!" he said, darting a spiteful look at Savinien.

"You are a murderer!" said the nobleman.

"Not more than the knife is the murderer!" replied Goupil.

"I ask your pardon," said Savinien.

"Have you had enough revenge?" said Goupil, with fierce irony, "will you go no further?"

"Forgive and forget on both sides," said Savinien.

"Your hand?" said the clerk, holding out his own to the nobleman.

"Here it is," replied Savinien, swallowing this shame for love of Ursule. "But speak; who urged you on?"

Goupil was examining, as it were, the two scales in which hung on the one side Savinien's slap, and on the other, his hatred for Minoret. For two seconds he was undecided, but finally a voice cried to him. "You will be a notary!" and he replied:

"Forget and forgive? Yes, on both sides, monsieur," squeezing the nobleman's hand.

"Then who is it that is persecuting Ursule?" said Savinien.

"Minoret! he would have liked to have seen her buried—Why? I do not know; but we will find out the reason. Don't mix me up in all this, I could do nothing more for you if I was suspected. Instead of attacking Ursule, I shall defend her; instead of serving Minoret, I shall try to defeat his plans. I live only to ruin him and destroy him. And I shall trample him under foot, I shall dance on his carcass, I will play dominoes with his bones! To-morrow, on all the walls of Nemours, Fontainebleau and Le Rouvre, will be written in red chalk: *Minoret is a thief.* Oh! By —d! I will make him burst like a mortar. Now, we are allied by an indiscretion; well then, if you like, I will go and kneel down before Mademoiselle Mirouët, and declare to her that I curse the mad passion that was urging me to kill her, I will implore her to forgive me. That will do her good! The justice of the peace and the curé are there, those two witnesses will be enough; but Monsieur Bongrand must pledge his honor not to ruin me in my career. I have prospects now."

"Wait a moment," replied Savinien, quite stunned

by this revelation. "Ursule, my child," he said as he came into the parlor, "the author of all your injury is horrified at his work, is repentant and wants to ask your pardon in the presence of these gentlemen, on the condition that all shall be forgotten."

"What! Goupil?" at once said the curé, the justice of the peace, and the doctor.

"Keep the secret," said Ursule laying her finger on her lips.

Goupil heard these words, saw Ursule's movement, and was touched.

"Mademoiselle," he said in moving tones, "I wish that all Nemours could now hear me confessing to you that an unfortunate passion turned my head, and suggested crimes to me that deserve the blame of honest folk. What I here say, I shall everywhere repeat while deploring the harm caused by wicked jokes, though they may perhaps have helped to hasten your happiness," he said, somewhat maliciously, as he rose, "as I see Madame de Portenduère is here."

"That is right, Goupil," said the curé, "mademoiselle has forgiven you; but you must never forget that you nearly became a murderer."

"Monsieur Bongrand," resumed Goupil, addressing the justice of the peace, "to-night I am going to negotiate with Lecœur for his practice; I hope that this reparation will not injure me in your esteem, and that you will second my application to the crown office and the minister."

The justice of the peace nodded his head thoughtfully, and Goupil left, to go and negotiate for the better of the two attorneys' practices in Nemours. Everyone remained with Ursule, and devoted himself all through the evening to restoring peace and tranquillity to her mind, upon which the satisfaction given by the clerk had already worked a change.

"All Nemours will know this," said Bongrand.

"You see, my child, that God was not angry with you," said the curé.

Minoret was rather late in returning from Le Rouvre, and dined late. About nine o'clock, at nightfall, he was in his Chinese pavilion, digesting his dinner beside his wife, with whom he was making plans for Désiré's future. Désiré had become very steady since he had belonged to the magistracy; he was working, and there was a chance of his succeeding the public prosecutor of Fontainebleau, who, it was said, was being promoted to Melun. A wife must be found for him, some poor girl belonging to an old and noble family; he might then attain to the Paris magistracy. Perhaps they might have him elected deputy for Fontainebleau, where Zélie thought of going to settle for the winter, after spending the warm weather at Le Rouvre. Whilst inwardly congratulating himself on having arranged all for the best, Minoret had ceased to think of Ursule, at the very moment when the drama which he had begun so simply was tangling itself in a terrible manner.

"Monsieur de Portenduère is there and wishes to speak to you," announced Cabirolle.

"Show him in," replied Zélie.

The twilight darkness prevented Madame Minoret from noticing the sudden pallor of her husband, who shivered as he heard the creak of Savinien's boots on the floor of the gallery which had once been the doctor's library. A vague presentiment of evil ran through the despoiler's veins. Savinien appeared, and remained standing, his hat on his head, his stick in his hand, his arms crossed over his chest, motionless in front of the husband and wife.

"I have come to ask, Monsieur and Madame Minoret, your reasons for so infamously tormenting a young girl who, as the whole town of Nemours is aware, is my future wife; why you have tried to stain her honor; why you desired her death, and why you have exposed her to the insults of such a man as Goupil?—Answer me."

"How funny you are, Monsieur Savinien," said Zélie, "to come and ask us to explain a thing which is unaccountable to us! I care no more for Ursule than for the year '40. Since the death of Uncle Minoret, I have thought no more of her than of my first nightgown! I have not breathed a word about her to Goupil, who is, besides, a rogue to whom I would not even trust the interests of my dog. Well, Minoret, why don't you answer? Are you going to let yourself be browbeaten by monsieur and accused of infamies that are beneath you? As if a man who has forty-eight thousand francs a year in

landed estate round a castle fit for a prince would condescend to such nonsense! Get up then, you lie there like a limp rag!"

"I do not know what monsieur means," replied Minoret at last, in his diminutive voice, the trembling of which was all the more noticeable on account of its shrillness. "What reason should I have to persecute that little girl? I may have told Goupil how vexed I was to see her in Nemours; my son Désiré was in love with her, and I did not at all like her as a wife for him, that is all."

"Goupil has told me all, Monsieur Minoret."

There was a moment of awful silence, in which the three scrutinized each other. Zélie had seen the nervous working of her giant's fat face.

"Although you are nothing but insects, I intend wreaking the most fearful vengeance upon you, and I know how to do it," pursued the nobleman. "It is not from you, a man of sixty-seven, that I shall demand satisfaction for the insults offered to Mademoiselle Mirouët, but from your son. The first time that Monsieur Minoret junior sets foot in Nemours, we shall meet; he will have to fight with me, and he will fight! or else he will be so disgraced, that he will never show his face anywhere again; if he does not come to Nemours I shall go to Fontainebleau, I will! I will get some satisfaction. It shall not be said that you were allowed to make a cowardly attempt to dishonor a defenceless young girl."

"But Goupil's accusations—are—not—" said Minoret.

"Do you want me to bring him face to face with you?" cried Savinien, cutting him short. "Believe me, do not spread the matter; it lies between you, Goupil and myself; leave it as it is and God shall decide it in the duel that I shall do your son the honor to propose."

"But it shall not be settled in this way!" cried Zélie. "Ah! you think I am going to let Désiré fight with you, an old sailor whose trade was to draw swords and pistols! If you have anything against Minoret, here is Minoret, take Minoret and fight with Minoret! But is my boy, who, as you say, is innocent of this, to bear the penalty?—Before that happens, one of my dogs shall be after you, my fine sir! Now then, Minoret, you stick there as stupid as a great ninny! Here you are in your own house and you allow monsieur to keep on his hat before your wife! And you, my young gentleman, will kindly clear out. A man's house is his castle. I don't know what you mean by your nonsense; but you had better go; and, if you touch Désiré, you will have to deal with me, you and your fool of an Ursule."

And she rang the bell violently, calling to her servants.

"Think well about what I have said!" repeated Savinien, who, unheeding Zélie's tirade, went out, leaving this sword of Damocles hanging over the couple.

"Now then! Minoret," said Zélie to her husband, "will you explain the meaning of this? A young

man does not come without any reason into a private house and make that terrible uproar and demand the blood of a son of the family."

"It is some trick on the part of that horrid ape Goupil, whom I had promised to help in having him appointed notary if he got me Le Rouvre cheap. I gave him ten per cent, twenty thousand francs in bills of exchange, and no doubt he is not satisfied."

"Yes; but what reason could he have had before to plot serenades and insults against Ursule?"

"He wanted to marry her."

"A penniless girl? he? Oh! indeed! Look here, Minoret, you are talking nonsense! and you are naturally too stupid to do so successfully, my boy. There is something underneath all this, and you will tell me."

"There is nothing."

"There is nothing? And I, I tell you you are lying, and we shall see!"

"Will you let me alone?"

"I shall turn the tap of that fountain of spite that you know, Goupil, and you will regret it."

"Just as you please."

"I know very well that it will be as I please! And what I want, above all, is that Désiré should not be harmed; if any misfortune happened to him, you see, I should do something which would send me to the scaffold. Désiré!—But—And you don't budge any more than that!"

A quarrel once started in this way between Minoret and his wife could not end without many private

broils. And so the senseless despoiler found the inward struggle between himself and Ursule aggravated through his blunder, and complicated by the addition of a fresh and terrible adversary. The next day, when he went out in search of Goupil, thinking to appease him by means of money, he read on the walls: *Minoret is a thief!* Everybody whom he met pitied him whilst asking him who was the author of this anonymous publication, and each one forgave the equivocation of his answers in recollecting his incapacity. Fools reap greater advantages from their weakness than sensible people obtain through their strength. We look on at a great man struggling against fate without helping him, and we assist a bankrupt grocer. Do you know why? Because we feel ourselves to be superior while protecting an imbecile, and we are annoyed at being merely the equal of a genius. A man of intellect would have been ruined had he, like Minoret, stammered out absurd answers in a scared manner. Zélie and her servants rubbed out the avenging inscription wherever it was to be found; but it remained upon Minoret's conscience. Although Goupil had given his word the day before to the attorney, he very impudently refused to carry out his agreement.

"You see, my dear Lecœur, I have been able to buy the practice of Monsieur Dionis, and I am in a position to recommend you to others. Withdraw your agreement, it is only waste of two pieces of stamped paper. Here are seventy centimes."

Lecœur was in too great fear of Goupil to complain. Immediately after, all Nemours learnt that Minoret became security to Dionis to facilitate the purchase of his practice for Goupil. The future notary wrote to Savinien refuting his confessions about Minoret, while telling the young nobleman that his new position, the laws adopted by the Supreme Court and his respect for justice forbade him to fight. Moreover, he warned the gentleman to treat him well thereafter, for he could *kick* extremely well, and at the first assault he vowed he would break his leg.

The walls of Nemours spoke no more. But the quarrel between Minoret and his wife endured, and Savinien maintained a savage silence. The marriage of the eldest Mademoiselle Massin with the future notary ten days after these events, was common talk. Mademoiselle Massin, on her side, had eighty thousand francs and her plainness, Goupil had his deformity and his practice; so this union seemed both probable and suitable.

Two lurking strangers seized Goupil in the road at midnight, just as he was coming out of Massin's house, beat him with a stick and disappeared. Goupil observed the deepest secrecy about this nocturnal scene, and contradicted an old woman who fancied she had recognized him upon looking out of her window.

These important trifling events were pondered by the justice of the peace, who discovered that Goupil possessed some mysterious power over Minoret, and determined to find out the cause.

Although public opinion in the little town had acknowledged Ursule's perfect innocence, she was recovering but slowly. In a state of bodily prostration which left both soul and spirit free, she became the seat of phenomena, the effects of which were moreover terrible, and of such a nature as to engross science, had science been admitted into any such confidence. Ten days after Madame de Portenduère's visit, Ursule had a dream which presented the characteristics of a supernatural vision, as much in the moral facts as in the physical circumstances, so to speak. The late Minoret, her godfather, appeared to her and made signs to her to go with him; she dressed herself, followed him out into the night as far as the house in the Rue des Bourgeois, where she found the most trifling things as they had been on the day of her godfather's death. The old man wore the clothes he had on the day before his death, his face was pale, and his movements made no sound at all; nevertheless, Ursule heard his voice perfectly, although it was feeble and like the repetition of a distant echo. The doctor led his ward into the study in the Chinese pavilion, where he made her raise the marble top of the little piece of Boule furniture, just as she had raised it on the day of his death; but, instead of

finding nothing there, she saw the letter that her godfather had told her to go and fetch; she opened it, and read it, as well as the will in favor of Savinien.

"The letters of the handwriting," she said to the curé, "were shining as if they had been traced with the sun's rays, they burnt my eyes."

When she looked at her uncle to thank him, she saw a kindly smile upon his colorless lips. And then, in its weak but clear voice, the spectre showed her Minoret in the passage listening to the secret, going to unscrew the lock and taking the packet of papers. Then, with his right hand, he seized his ward and forced her to walk with the step of the dead in order to follow Minoret to the post-house. Ursule went through the town, entered the post-house and Zélie's old room, where the spectre made her look at the despoiler unsealing the letters, reading them and burning them.

"He could only make the third match light to burn the papers," said Ursule, "and he buried the remains in the ashes. Afterward, my godfather brought me back to our house and I saw Monsieur Minoret-Levrault creeping into the library, whence he took, in the third volume of the *Pandects*, the three bonds, each twelve thousand francs a year, as well as the value of the arrears in banknotes. My godfather then said to me: 'He is the author of the tortures which have laid you at Death's door; but God wills that you should be happy. You will not die yet, you will marry

Savinien! If you love me, if you love Savinien, you will demand your fortune from my nephew. Will you swear it to me?' "

Shining like the Saviour during His transfiguration, Minoret's spirit had then, such was Ursule's state of oppression, caused her such distress of mind that she promised to do all that her uncle wished in order to stop the nightmare. She had wakened standing in the middle of her room, facing her godfather's portrait which she had placed there since her illness. She got back into bed, went to sleep again after strong agitation of spirit, and remembered this singular vision upon waking; but she did not dare to mention it. Her exquisite judgment and delicacy revolted at the thought of revealing a dream having for aim and cause her pecuniary interests; she naturally attributed it to the chatter with which La Bougival had sent her to sleep, which had been all about her godfather's generosity to her and the certainty that her nurse still had in that respect. But the dream returned, with aggravations which made it exceedingly dreadful. The second time, her godfather's icy hand was laid on her shoulder, causing her the most cruel pain, an indefinable sensation. "You must obey the dead!" he said in sepulchral tones.

"And tears," she said, "fell from his white and vacant eyes."

The third time, the dead man took her by her long plaits and showed her Minoret talking with Goupil and promising him money if he would take

Ursule to Sens. Ursule then resolved to relate her three dreams to the Abbé Chaperon.

"Monsieur le Curé," she said to him one evening, "do you believe that the dead can re-appear?"

"My child, sacred history, secular and modern history, give several instances of testimony on this subject; but the Church has never made an Article of Faith of it; and as to science, in France, it scorns it."

"What do you think?"

"God's power, my child, is infinite."

"Did my godfather ever speak to you about that kind of thing?"

"Yes, often. He had changed his opinion on those matters. His conversion dates from the day, so he has told me twenty times, upon which a woman in Paris heard you praying for him in Nemours, and saw the red dot you had put before Saint-Savinien's day in your almanac."

Ursule gave a piercing cry that made the priest shiver; she remembered the scene when, upon his return to Nemours, her godfather had read her mind and had taken away her almanac.

"If that is so," she said, "my visions are quite possible. My godfather has appeared to me as Jesus did to His disciples. He is enveloped in golden light, he speaks! I wanted to ask you to say a mass for the repose of his soul and implore the help of God so as to stop these apparitions, which tire me out."

She narrated her three dreams and their most

trifling details, insisting upon the absolute truth of the facts, the facility of her movements, and the somnambulism of an inner self, which, she said, moved about under the spirit's guidance with the greatest ease.

The priest, knowing Ursule's truthfulness, was not a little surprised at the accurate description of the room formerly occupied by Zélie Minoret in her post-house, in which Ursule had never been, and of which, in fact, she had never even heard.

"By what means can these strange apparitions take place?" said Ursule. "What did my godfather think of it?"

"Your godfather, my child, went by hypothesis. He had admitted the existence of a spiritual world, a world of ideas. If ideas are a production peculiar to man, if they subsist upon a life which is their own, they might have shapes that are imperceptible to our outward senses, but perceptible to our inward senses when they are in certain conditions. And so your godfather's ideas may envelop you, and perhaps you have invested them with his semblance. Then, if Minoret has committed these acts, they resolve themselves into ideas; for all action is the result of several ideas. Now, if ideas move in the spiritual world your spirit must have perceived them by penetrating into it. These phenomena are not more extraordinary than those of memory, and those of memory are as surprising and unaccountable as those of the perfume of plants, which may be the ideas of the plant."

"Dear me! how you enlarge the world! But to hear a corpse speak, to see it walking and acting, is that possible?"

"In Sweden," replied the Abbé Chaperon, "Swedenborg has clearly proved that he communicated with the dead. However, come into the library and you will read in the life of the famous Duc de Montmorency, who was beheaded at Toulouse, and certainly was not the man to invent idle tales, an adventure that is almost similar to yours and which had happened a hundred years before, at Cardan."

Ursule and the curé went up to the first story, and the old man picked her out a small edition in 12mo, printed in Paris in 1666, of *L'Histoire de Henri de Montmorency*, written by a contemporary ecclesiastic who had known the prince.

"Read it," said the curé, giving her the volume at pages 175 and 176. "Your godfather often read this passage, and look, here still is some of his snuff."

"And he himself is no more!" said Ursule, taking the book and reading this passage:

"The siege of Privas was remarkable on account of the loss of several persons in command; two major-generals died there, to wit, the Marquis d'Uxelles, from a wound he received in the outworks, and the Marquis de Porte, from a musket-shot in the head. The day he was killed he was to have been made Marshal of France. About the time the marquis died, the Duc de Montmorency, who was asleep in his tent, was awakened by a voice resembling that of the marquis, which

was bidding him farewell. The affection he felt for so near a relation led him to attribute the illusion of this dream to the power of his imagination; the labors of the night which he had spent, as was his wont, in the trenches, caused him to fall asleep again without any apprehension. But the same voice disturbed him once more, and the phantom, that he had seen only in his sleep, compelled him to wake again and to distinctly hear the same words it had uttered before disappearing. The duke then recollected that one day when they were listening to the philosopher Pitrat discoursing upon the separation of the soul from the body, they had promised to say good-bye to each other if the first who happened to die was permitted to do so. Upon which, unable to overcome the dread of the truth of this warning, he promptly sent one of his servants to the marquis's quarters, which were some distance from his own. But, before his man could return, the king sent to tell him, through persons who were best calculated to comfort him, of the misfortune he had feared.

"I leave it to the doctors to quarrel over the reason of this event, which I have heard related by the Duc de Montmorency several times, and which I thought so marvelous and probable as to be worth quoting."

"But then," said Ursule, "what ought I to do?"

"My child," replied the curé, "it is a question of such serious things and such that would be so advantageous to yourself that you should maintain absolute silence. Now that you have confided the secrets of this apparition to me, perhaps it will not occur again. Moreover, you are now strong enough to go to church; so, to-morrow, you will go there to return thanks to God and pray Him to give your godfather peace. You may also rest assured that you have placed your secret in discreet keeping."

"If you only knew my terrors when I go to sleep

again! the looks my godfather gives me! The last time, he hung on to my dress to see me longer. I woke up with tears streaming down my face."

"Do not worry, he will not return," said the curé.

Without losing an instant, the Abbé Chaperon went to Minoret's and begged him to give him a moment's interview in the Chinese pavilion, only stipulating that they should be alone.

"Nobody can hear us?" said the Abbé Chaperon.

"No one," replied Minoret.

"Monsieur, my character is well known to you," said the old man, fixing a gentle but watchful glance upon Minoret's face. "I have to speak about the gravest and most extraordinary things, which concern you alone and about which you may be sure I shall preserve the closest secrecy, but it is impossible that I should not inform you of them. When your uncle was alive, there used to be there," said the priest, pointing to the spot where it had stood, "a small Boule sideboard with a marble top,"—Minoret grew livid,—"and, underneath this marble, your uncle had put a letter for his ward—"

And the curé related, without omitting the slightest incident, Minoret's own conduct to Minoret himself. The former postmaster, upon hearing the detail of the two matches that went out before kindling, felt his hair rising on his scalp.

"Who could have invented such nonsense?" he said to the curé in a choking voice when the recital was over.

"The dead man himself!"

This reply gave Minoret something of a shock, as he too used to see the doctor in his dreams.

"God is very kind, Monsieur le Curé, to perform miracles on my account," rejoined Minoret, whose peril inspired him with the only joke he made in all his life.

"All that God does is natural," answered the priest.

"Your phantasmagoria does not frighten me," said the giant, somewhat recovering his presence of mind.

"I have not come to frighten you, dear monsieur, for I would not mention this to a living soul," said the curé, "you alone know the truth. It is a matter between you and God."

"Look here, Monsieur le Curé, do you believe me capable of such a horrible abuse of confidence?"

"I only believe in those crimes that are confessed to me and repented of," said the priest, in apostolic tones.

"A crime?" cried Minoret.

"A crime that is awful in its consequences."

"How?"

"By escaping human justice. Crimes that are not atoned for here below will be in the next life. God Himself avenges innocence."

"Do you believe that God troubles Himself about these trifles?"

"Did He not see every detail in the universe at

a glance, as you take in a whole landscape with your eye, He would not be God."

"Monsieur le Curé, do you give me your word that you have only been given these details by my uncle?"

"Your uncle has appeared three times to Ursule to repeat them to her. Worn out by her dreams, she has confided these revelations to me in secret, and considers them so devoid of reason that she will never mention them. And so you may be easy on that point."

"But I am easy in every way, Monsieur Chaperon."

"I hope so," said the old priest. "Even though I might call these dream warnings absurd, I should still deem it necessary to inform you of them, on account of the singularity of the details. You are an honest man, and have gained your handsome fortune too lawfully to want to add to it by theft. Besides, you are an almost primitive man, and would be too much tortured by remorse. We have within us a feeling of right, in the most civilized as well as in the most uncivilized man, which will not permit us to peacefully enjoy any good that is wrongfully acquired according to the laws of the society in which we live, for well constituted societies are modeled upon the rules imposed upon mankind by God Himself. In this, communities are of divine origin. Man does not discover ideas, he does not invent forms, he imitates the eternal relations that surround him on all sides. And so, see

what happens: no criminal going to the scaffold with the power of taking the secret of his crimes with him, allows his head to be cut off before he has made the confession to which he is impelled by some mysterious power. Therefore, my dear Monsieur Minoret, if you are at ease, I shall go away feeling happy."

Minoret was so stupefied that he did not show the curé out. When he thought he was quite alone, he flew into an apoplectic rage; he gave vent to the wildest blasphemies, and called Ursule the most odious names.

"Well, what has she done to you?" said his wife, who had tiptoed back after having shown out the curé.

For the first and only time in his life, Minoret, intoxicated with rage and exasperated by his wife's ceaseless questions, gave her such a beating that, when she fell covered with bruises, he was obliged to pick her up in his arms and, feeling thoroughly ashamed, to put her to bed himself. He had a slight illness: the doctor had to bleed him twice. When he was up, everyone in the course of time noticed a change in him. Minoret used to walk alone, and would often go through the streets like a man disquieted. He seemed absent-minded when listening, he who had never had two ideas in his head. At last, one evening, in the Grande-Rue, he met the justice of the peace, who was doubtless going to fetch Ursule in order to escort her to Madame de Portenduère's, where the whist-party had recommenced.

"Monsieur Bongrand, I have something rather important to say to my cousin," he said, taking the justice by the arm, "and I am glad to see you, you may be able to advise her."

They found Ursule practising; she rose with a cold and stately manner upon seeing Minoret.

"My child, Monsieur Minoret wants to talk business with you," said the justice of the peace. "By-the-bye, do not forget to give me your bonds; I am going to Paris, and will collect yours and La Bougival's dividends."

"Cousin," said Minoret, "our uncle had accustomed you to greater comfort than you now have."

"One can be very happy with little money," she said.

"I was thinking that money might increase your happiness," rejoined Minoret, "and I was coming to offer some to you, out of respect for my uncle's memory."

"There was a simple way of showing your respect for him," said Ursule severely. "You might have left his house as it was and sold it to me, for you only raised it to so high a price in the hopes of finding some treasure—"

"Well," said Minoret, evidently depressed, "if you had twelve thousand francs a year, you would be in a position to marry more advantageously."

"I have not got it."

"But if I were to give it to you, on condition that you bought an estate in Brittany, the native

country of Madame de Portenduère, who would then consent to your marriage with her son— ?"

"Monsieur Minoret," said Ursule, "I have no right at all to so large a sum and I could not accept it from you. We are very slightly related and still less friends. I have already suffered too much from the miseries of calumny to wish to give rise to scandal. What have I done to deserve this money? Upon what grounds do you make me such a present? These questions, which I have the right to ask you, will be answered by everyone according to his own interpretation, it would be considered as reparation for some injury, and I would not accept any. Your uncle did not bring me up with ignoble feelings. One should not accept anything but from one's friends: I could not feel affection for you, and I should necessarily be ungrateful. I do not wish to run the risk of wanting in gratitude."

"You refuse?" cried the giant, who could not conceive the idea of anyone being able to refuse a fortune.

"I refuse," repeated Ursule.

"But what is your reason for offering mademoiselle such a fortune?" asked the old lawyer, looking fixedly at Minoret, "you have an idea; have you an idea?"

"Well, the idea of sending her away from Nemours so that my son should leave me in peace; he is in love with her and wants to marry her."

"Well then, we will see," replied the justice of

the peace, securing his spectacles. "Give us time to think it over."

He accompanied Minoret as far as his house, all the time commending his anxiety for Désiré's future, rather blaming Ursule's precipitation and promising to make her listen to reason. As soon as Minoret had got home, Bongrand went to the postmaster, borrowed his horse and gig, hurried to Fontainebleau, asked for the deputy and was told that he must be spending the evening at the sub-prefect's. The justice of the peace, delighted, called there. Désiré was playing a game of whist with the prosecutor's wife, the sub-prefect's wife and the colonel of the regiment then in garrison.

"I have come to tell you good news," said Monsieur Bongrand to Désiré, "you love your cousin Ursule Mirouët, and your father is no longer opposed to your marriage."

"I love Ursule Mirouët?" cried Désiré, laughing, "why do you assume it to be Ursule Mirouët? I recollect having sometimes seen this little girl, who is certainly very beautiful, at the house of the late Minoret, my great-uncle; but she is extremely religious; and if, like everyone else, I have done justice to her charms, I have never had my head turned by this rather insipid blonde," said he, smiling at the sub-prefect's wife,—she was a piquant brunette, according to the old expression of the last century.—"Where do you come from, my dear Monsieur Bongrand? Everyone knows that my father is lord paramount of forty-eight thousand

francs a year in property lying round his Château du Rouvre, and all the world knows that I have forty-eight thousand permanent and financial reasons for not loving the ward of the court. If I were to marry an insignificant girl, these ladies would take me for an idiot."

"Then you have never tormented your father on the subject of Ursule?"

"Never."

"You hear this, Monsieur le Procureur du Roi?" said the justice of the peace to this magistrate, who had been listening to them, and whom he led into an embrasure, where they stood talking about a quarter of an hour. An hour afterward, the justice of the peace, having returned to Nemours and to Ursule's house, sent La Bougival to fetch Minoret, who came immediately.

"Mademoiselle—" said Bongrand to Minoret as he came in.

"Accepts?' said Minoret interrupting him.

"No, not yet," replied the justice, feeling his spectacles, "she has had scruples as to your son's condition, for she has been very badly treated in regard to a similar passion, and knows the cost of tranquillity. Can you swear to her that your son is madly in love with her, and that you have no other motive than that of protecting our dear Ursule from any fresh *goupilleries?*"

"Oh! I swear," said Minoret.

"Stop! Papa Minoret!" said the justice of the peace, removing one of his hands from his

trousers-pocket to tap Minoret on the shoulder, making him start. "Do not take a false oath so lightly."

"A false oath?"

"It is either you or your son, who has just sworn at Fontainebleau, at the sub-prefect's, before four persons and the public prosecutor, that he has never thought of his cousin Ursule Mirouët. Then you have other reasons for offering her such an enormous capital? I saw that you were making rash assertions, and went myself to Fontainebleau."

Minoret stood dumfounded at his own stupidity.

"But there is no harm, Monsieur Bongrand, in offering to help a relation in a marriage which seems likely to make her happy, and in finding pretexts for overcoming her modesty."

Minoret, to whom danger had suggested an almost plausible excuse, wiped his forehead, which was covered with big beads of perspiration.

"You know my motives for refusing," answered Ursule, "and I beg you not to come here again. Monsieur de Portenduère, without confiding his reasons to me, entertains feelings of scorn and even hatred towards you, which forbid me to receive you. My happiness is my entire fortune, I do not blush to confess it; and so I will not endanger it, as Monsieur de Portenduère is only waiting until I come of age, to marry me."

"The proverb, 'Money does everything' is indeed untrue," said great fat Minoret, looking at the justice of the peace, whose observing eyes made him very uncomfortable.

He got up and left, but outside he found the atmosphere as oppressive as in the little parlor.

"And yet there must be an end to all this," he said to himself as he reached home.

"Your bond, my child?" said the justice of the peace, somewhat astonished at Ursule's serenity after so strange an incident.

When she brought her own and La Bougival's bonds, Ursule found the justice striding up and down.

"Have you any idea of the object of that great booby's proceedings?" he said.

"None that I can tell," she replied.

Monsieur Bongrand looked at her in surprise.

"Then we have the same idea," he answered. "Here, keep the numbers of these two bonds in case I should lose them; one should always take that precaution."

Bongrand then himself wrote down the number of Ursule's and of her nurse's bond on a card.

"Good-bye, my child; I shall be away two days, but I shall be here on the third for my sitting."

*

That very night, Ursule had an apparition which took place in a strange way.

It seemed to her that her bed was in the cemetery at Nemours, and that her uncle's grave was at the foot of her bed. The white stone on which she read the inscription dazzled her most intensely in opening like the oblong cover of an album. She uttered piercing cries, but her uncle's spirit slowly stood up. First she saw the yellow head and the shining white hair surrounded by a sort of halo. The eyes were like two rays beneath the bare forehead, and he was rising, as if impelled by some superior power. Ursule trembled dreadfully in her bodily exterior, her flesh was like a burning garment and there seemed, she said later on, to be another self moving within her.

"Godfather, have mercy!" she said.

"Mercy? there is no longer time," he said in the voice of the dead, according to the inexplicable expression of the poor girl when relating this fresh dream to the Abbé Chaperon. "*He* has been warned, *he* has not paid attention to the warnings. His son's days are numbered. If he has not confessed all, restored all within a short time, he will mourn his son, who will die a horrible and violent death. Let him know it!"

The spirit pointed to a row of figures sparkling on the wall as if they had been written in fire, and said:

"There is his sentence!"

When her uncle had again lain down in his tomb, Ursule heard the sound of the falling stone, then in the distance a strange noise of horses and a man's cries.

The next day, Ursule found herself exhausted. She could not get up, so much was she oppressed by this dream. She begged her nurse to go at once to the Abbé Chaperon's and bring him back with her. The old man came after having said mass; but he was not at all astonished at Ursule's story; he believed the robbery to be true and no longer sought any explanation of the anomalous life of his dear *little dreamer*. He left Ursule at once, and hurried to Minoret's.

"*Mon Dieu!* Monsieur le Curé," said Zélie to the priest, "my husband's temper is soured, I don't know what is the matter with him. Hitherto he has been like a child; but, for the last two months, he is no longer the same. To have flown into such a passion as to strike me, I, who am so gentle! the man must be entirely changed. You will find him among the rocks, he spends all his days there! What does he do?"

In spite of the heat—it was then September 1836—the priest crossed the canal and struck into a pathway, seeing Minoret at the foot of one of the rocks.

"You are very much worried, Monsieur Minoret,"

said the priest, appearing before the culprit, "you belong to me, for you are suffering. Unhappily, I have come no doubt to augment your anxieties. Last night Ursule had a terrible dream. Your uncle lifted his tombstone to prophesy misfortune to your family. Indeed I do not come to frighten you, but you ought to know what he said—"

"Really, Monsieur le Curé, I can get no peace anywhere, not even on these rocks—I want to know nothing of what is going on in the other world."

"I will go away, monsieur; I did not come all this way in the heat for my own pleasure," said the priest, wiping his forehead.

"Well, what did the old man say?" asked Minoret.

"You are threatened with the loss of your son. If he has related things that you alone know of, it makes one shudder to think of the things that we do not know. Restore it, dear monsieur, restore it! Do not condemn yourself for a little gold."

"But what am I to restore?"

"The fortune that the doctor intended for Ursule. I now know that you took those three bonds. You began by persecuting the poor girl, and you end by offering her a dowry; you fall into falsehood, you become entangled in its intricacies and make mistakes at every turn. You are clumsy, and have been badly served by your accomplice Goupil, who laughs at you. You had better make haste, for you are being watched by shrewd, intelligent people, Ursule's friends. Make restitution!

and, if you do not save your son, who is perhaps not menaced, you will save your soul and your honor. In a community like this, in a little town where every one's eyes are upon you, and where all is found out although all is not known, how can you hide a fortune wrongfully acquired? Come, my dear son, an innocent man would not have let me talk so long."

"Go to the devil!" cried Minoret, "I don't know why you *all* go at me. I would rather have these stones, they leave me in peace."

"Good-bye. You have been warned by me, monsieur, without either the poor child or myself having said a single word to anybody whatever. But take care! there is one man who has his eye upon you. God have pity upon you!"

The curé went away; but, after walking a few steps, he turned round to look once more at Minoret.

Minoret was holding his head in his hands, for his head was uncomfortable. Minoret was a little crazy. In the first place, he had kept the three bonds, he did not know what to do with them, he dared not go and receive them himself, he was afraid lest somebody should remark it; he did not want to sell them, and was trying to find some way of transferring them. He, even he! would create romances about business in which the issue was always the transfer of the accursed bonds. In this fearful predicament, he nevertheless thought of confessing all to his wife, so as to have some advice. Zélie, who had steered her own business

so well, would know how to help him out of this tiresome dilemma. Three per cent stock was then at eighty francs, so it was a question, with arrears, of restoring nearly a million! To return a million, without there being any proof as to its being stolen! this was no light matter. And so Minoret spent all September and part of October a prey to his remorse and irresolution. To the great astonishment of the whole town, he grew thin.

A dreadful event hurried on the disclosure that Minoret was longing to make to Zélie; the sword of Damocles stirred over their heads. Toward the middle of October, Monsieur and Madame Minoret received the following letter from their son:

"MY DEAR MOTHER,

"If I have not been to see you since the holidays, it is, first, because I was on duty in the absence of Monsieur le Procureur du Roi, and then because I knew Monsieur de Portenduère was waiting for me to visit Nemours to pick a quarrel with me. Tired, perhaps, of putting off the revenge that he wished to wreak upon our family, the viscount came to Fontainebleau, where he had made an appointment with one of his friends from Paris, after having secured the co-operation of the Vicomte de Soulanges, who is major of the hussars now in garrison here. He called upon me very politely, accompanied by these two gentlemen, and told me that my father was undoubtedly the author of the infamous persecutions practised upon Ursule Mirouët, his future wife; he proved it to me by explaining to me Goupil's confession in the presence of witnesses, and also the conduct of my father, who first had refused to fulfil the promises made to Goupil to reward him for his treacherous inventions, and who, after having provided him with funds for the negotiation of the attorney's office at Nemours, had,

through fear, offered his security to Monsieur Dionis for the price of his practice, and finally established Goupil. The viscount, being unable to fight a man of sixty-seven, and being absolutely determined to avenge the injuries done to Ursule, has formally demanded reparation from me. His resolution, taken and weighed in silence, was immovable. Had I declined a duel, he had resolved to meet me in a drawing-room, in the presence of persons whose esteem I most value, and there to insult me so seriously, that I should then have to fight or my career would come to an end. In France, a coward is universally scouted. Moreover, men of honor would understand his motives for exacting reparation. He expressed his sorrow at being driven to such extremities. According to his seconds, the most sensible thing for me to do would be to settle an encounter as honorable men are in the habit of doing, so that Ursule Mirouët should not be the cause of the quarrel. In fact, to avoid any scandal in France, we could travel over the nearest frontier with our seconds. In this way things will be settled for the best. He said his name was worth ten times my fortune, and with his future happiness he was risking more than I in this fight, which will be to the death. He has advised me to choose my seconds, and to settle these points. The seconds that I chose met his yesterday, and unanimously agreed that I owe reparation. So in eight days I shall start for Geneva with two of my friends. Monsieur de Portenduère, Monsieur de Soulanges and Monsieur de Trailles will also go. We shall fight with pistols; all the conditions of the duel are decided; we shall each fire three times, and afterward, no matter what happens, all will be over. To avoid spreading so shameful an affair—for I cannot possibly justify my father's conduct—I am writing to you at the last minute. I will not go to see you, on account of the fury to which you might give way and which would not be at all agreeable. In order to get on in society I must follow its rules; and, where there may be ten reasons for a viscount's son to fight, there are a hundred for a postmaster's son. I shall pass through Nemours by night, and will say good-bye to you."

When this letter had been read, there was a scene between Zélie and Minoret, which ended by the confession of the theft, and all the circumstances relating to it and the strange scenes to which it had everywhere given rise, even in the world of dreams. The million fascinated Zélie quite as much as it had fascinated Minoret.

"You stay quietly here," said Zélie to her husband, without reproaching him at all for his follies, "I will look after all this. We will keep the money, and Désiré shall not fight."

Madame Minoret put on her hat and shawl, ran over to Ursule's with her son's letter, and found her alone, for it was about midday.

In spite of her assurance, Zélie Minoret was chilled by the cold glance that the orphan gave her; but she curbed herself, as it were, in her cowardice and assumed an easy tone.

"Here, Mademoiselle Mirouët, will you oblige me by reading this letter and telling me what you think of it?" she cried, holding out the deputy's letter to Ursule.

Ursule experienced a thousand conflicting emotions upon reading this letter, which told her how much she was loved, and what care Savinien took of the honor of her whom he was taking for his wife; but she was both too religious and too charitable to wish to be the cause of her bitterest enemy's death or suffering.

"I promise, madame, to prevent this duel, and you may be easy; but I beg you will leave me this letter."

"Come, my little angel, could we not do better than that? Listen to me carefully. We have altogether forty-eight thousand francs a year from the estate round about Le Rouvre, which is a truly royal château; besides that, we can give Désiré twenty-four thousand francs a year in bonds of the national debt, in all, seventy-two thousand francs a year. You will agree that there are not many matches that can vie with him. You are an ambitious little thing, and you are right," said Zélie, seeing Ursule's quick gesture of denial. "I have come to ask your hand for Désiré; you bear your godfather's name, it will be doing him an honor. Désiré, as you have seen, is a handsome fellow; he is very well thought of at Fontainebleau, and he will soon be public prosecutor. You are a wheedler, you could make him go to Paris. We would give you a fine house in Paris, you would be conspicuous, you would play a grand part, for with seventy-two thousand francs a year and the salary from an appointment, you and Désiré, you would be in the highest society. Consult your friends and see what they will tell you."

"I need only to consult my heart, madame."

"Tush! tush! do you mean to tell me about that little heart-breaker of a Savinien? Well! you will pay very dear for his name, his little moustaches turned up like two hooks, and his black hair. And a nice sort of fellow! You will flourish in a household on seven thousand francs a year and a man who ran up a debt of a hundred thousand francs in

Paris in two years. And then, not that you know that yet, all men are alike, my child! and, without conceit, my Désiré is as good as a king's son."

"You forget, madame, your son's danger at this present moment, which can only be averted by Monsieur de Portenduère's desire to please me. This peril would be irretrievable if he learned that you were making dishonorable proposals to me.— You must know, madame, that I should be happier with the moderate fortune to which you allude than with the wealth with which you want to dazzle me. For some reason yet unknown, but that will be known, madame, Monsieur Minoret has, by his odious persecutions of me, published the affection which binds me to Monsieur de Portenduère and which may be confessed, for there is no doubt that his mother will bless it; so I must tell you that this affection, permissible and lawful, is my whole life. No destiny, however brilliant, however exalted it might be, could make me change. I love absolutely and unalterably. So it would be a crime for which I should be punished to marry a man to whom I should bring a heart wholly given to Savinien. Now, madame, since you force me to it I will say even more: did I not love Monsieur de Portenduère at all, I should not even then be able to resolve on bearing the sorrows and joys of life in the company of your son. If Monsieur Savinien has had debts, you have often paid Monsieur Désiré's. Our characters are neither sufficiently alike nor dissimilar to

permit us to live together without secret bitterness. Perhaps I might not show him that forbearance that wives owe their husbands, so he would soon find me burdensome. Do not think any more of an alliance of which I am unworthy and which I can refuse without causing you the least pain as, with such advantages, you will not fail in finding young girls more beautiful than I, of a superior rank, and richer."

"Will you promise me, little one," said Zélie, "that you will prevent these two young men from taking their journey and from fighting?"

"I foresee that it will be the greatest sacrifice Monsieur de Portenduère can make for me; but my marriage wreath must not be put on by blood-stained hands."

"Well, thank you, cousin, and I hope you may be happy."

"And I, madame," said Ursule, "hope that you may realize your son's grand future."

This answer struck the heart of the deputy's mother, who recalled the prophecies in Ursule's last dream; she stood up, her little eyes fixed upon Ursule's face, so white, so pure and so beautiful in her dress of half-mourning, for Ursule had risen as a hint to her so-called cousin to go.

"Then you believe in dreams?" she said.

"I have suffered too much from them not to believe in them."

"But then—" said Zélie.

"Good-bye, madame," said Ursule, bowing to Madame Minoret upon hearing the curé's footsteps.

The Abbé Chaperon was surprised at finding Madame Minoret at Ursule's. The anxiety depicted on the thin, wrinkled face of the former postmistress naturally set the priest watching the two women alternately.

"Do you believe in *revenants*—ghosts—?" said Zélie to the curé.

"Do you believe in *revenus*—revenues—?" replied the priest, smiling.

"They are sly, all these people," thought Zélie, "they want to *diddle* us. This old priest, the old justice of the peace and that young scamp of a Savinien are all agreed. There are no more dreams than I have hair in the palm of my hand."

She left after making two curt, stiff bows.

"I know why Savinien went to Fontainebleau," said Ursule to the Abbé Chaperon, informing him of the duel and begging him to use his influence in preventing it.

"And Madame Minoret has offered you her son's hand?" said the old priest.

"Yes."

"Minoret has probably confessed his crime to his wife," added the curé.

The justice of the peace, arriving at that moment, heard of the proceedings and of the offer just made by Zélie, whose hatred of Ursule was well known to him, and he looked at the curé as much as to say: "Come out, I want to speak to you about Ursule without her hearing us."

"Savinien shall know that you have refused

eighty thousand francs a year, and the cock of Nemours!" he said.

"Is it a sacrifice then?" she replied. "Are there any sacrifices when one truly loves? And is there any merit whatever in refusing the son of a man whom we despise? However others may make virtues of their dislikes, that must not be the morality of a girl brought up by a Jordy, an Abbé Chaperon and our dear doctor!" she said, looking at the portrait.

Bongrand took Ursule's hand and kissed it.

"Do you know," said the justice of the peace to the curé, when they were in the street, "what Madame Minoret has just done?"

"What?" replied the priest, examining the justice with a shrewd look that appeared to be merely curious.

"She wanted to make arrangements for restitution."

"Then you think—!" rejoined the Abbé Chaperon.

"I do not think, I am certain, and look here."

The justice of the peace pointed to Minoret, who was approaching them on his way home, for, upon leaving Ursule's, the two friends went back up the Grand'Rue of Nemours.

"Obliged as I have been to plead in the Assize Courts, I have naturally studied remorse thoroughly, but I have never seen anything to equal this! What is it that has given this flaccidity, this pallor to cheeks that used be as tight as a drum, bursting with

the sound, rude health of careless folk? Who has drawn dark circles round those eyes and subdued their rustic sprightliness? Would you ever have believed that this forehead could wrinkle, and that the brain of this colossus could ever be agitated? He feels his heart at last! I understand remorse as well as you understand penitence, my dear curé; till now those whom I have observed expected their penalty or were going to endure it in order to be quits with society: they were either resigned or they breathed vengeance; but here is remorse without expiation, remorse pure and simple, greedy for its prey and devouring it."

"You do not yet know," said the justice of the peace, stopping Minoret, "that Mademoiselle Mirouët has just refused the hand of your son?"

"But," said the curé, "be easy, she will prevent his duel with Monsieur de Portenduère."

"Ah! my wife has succeeded?" said Minoret. "I am very glad, for I could hardly keep alive."

"Indeed you are so much changed, that you are no longer like yourself," said the justice.

Minoret looked alternately at Bongrand and the curé to find out whether the priest had been guilty of any indiscretion; but the Abbé Chaperon preserved an impassiveness of countenance, a mournful serenity, that reassured the culprit.

"And it is all the more astonishing," still pursued the justice of the peace, "because you ought to experience nothing but content. After all, you are seigneur of Le Rouvre, you have added to it Les

Bordières, all your farms, mills, meadows—you have a hundred thousand francs a year with your investments in the Funds."

"I have nothing in the Funds," said Minoret, hastily.

"Bah!" said the justice of the peace. "Look here, this is rather like your son's love for Ursule, first he turns up his nose at her, then asks her in marriage. After having tried to kill Ursule with grief, you want her for a daughter-in-law! My dear monsieur; you have something in your mind—"

Minoret tried to answer, sought for words, and all he could hit upon was:

"You are funny, Monsieur le Juge de Paix—Good-bye, messieurs."

And he turned slowly into the Rue des Bourgeois.

"He has stolen our poor Ursule's fortune! but how are we to fish for proofs?"

"God grant—!" said the curé.

"God has placed some feeling within us which is already speaking in this man," broke in the justice of the peace, "but we call that *presumption*, and human justice requires something more."

"Come up, do, Monsieur Bongrand!" cried La Bougival to the justice of the peace, who was passing.

Bongrand arrived just as the curé was putting on his spectacles to read three numbers written in the hand of the late Minoret on the fly-leaf of colored vellum, gummed inside the cover by the binder, and which Ursule had just discovered.

"What is the meaning of this? Our dear doctor was too great a lover of books to spoil the fly-leaf of a cover," said the Abbé Chaperon, "here are three numbers entered between a first number preceded by an M, and another number preceded by a U."

"What do you say?" replied Bongrand, "let me see." "*Mon Dieu!*" cried the justice of the peace, "is not this enough to open the eyes of an atheist by proving the existence of a Providence? I think that human justice is the development of a divine idea that hovers over communities!"

He seized Ursule and kissed her on the forehead.

"Oh! my child, you will be happy and rich, and through me!"

"What is the matter?" said the curé.

"My dear monsieur," cried La Bougival, catching hold of the justice's blue frock-coat, "oh! do let me embrace you for what you have just said."

"Explain yourself, so as to spare any false joy," said the curé.

"If, to become rich, I have to cause pain to anyone," said Ursule, anticipating criminal proceedings, "I—"

"Eh!" said the justice of the peace, interrupting

Ursule, "just think of the delight you will be giving our dear Savinien."

"But you are mad!" said the curé.

"No, my dear curé," said the justice, "listen. The certificates of the national debt have as many series as there are letters in the alphabet; and each number bears the letter of its series; but the bonds of stock to bearer cannot have any letter at all, as they are in nobody's name; and so what you see proves that, the day upon which the old man invested his money in the Funds, he made a note of his bond of fifteen thousand francs a year bearing the letter M—Minoret,—the numbers without letters of the three bonds to bearer, and those belonging to Ursule Mirouët, the number of which is 23,534, and which as you see, immediately follows that of the fifteen thousand franc bond. This coincidence proves that these numbers are those of five bonds obtained on the same day, and noted down by the old man in case of loss. I had advised him to put Ursule's fortune in bonds to bearer, and he must have invested his own capital, that which he intended for Ursule and that which belonged to his ward, on the same day. I am going to Dionis's to consult the inventory; and, if the number of the inscription he left in his own name is 23,533, letter M, then we may be sure that on that same day, through the office of the same exchange agent, he invested: *primo*, his capital in one bond; *secundo*, his savings in three bonds to bearer, numbered without any

series letter; *tertio*, his ward's capital; the book of transfers will give undeniable proofs. Ah! Minoret, you sly dog, I've got you—*Motus*, my boys!"

The justice of the peace left the curé, La Bougival and Ursule lost in profound admiration of the ways in which God leads innocence to its triumph.

"The finger of God is in this," cried the Abbé Chaperon.

"Will they do him any harm?" said Ursule.

"Ah! mademoiselle!" cried La Bougival, "I would give a rope to hang him with."

The justice of the peace had already arrived at Goupil's, the appointed successor to Dionis, and was walking into the office with a sufficiently indifferent air.

"I want," said he to Goupil, "some slight information about the Minoret inheritance."

"What is it?" replied Goupil.

"Did the old man leave one or more three per cent bonds?"

"He left fifteen thousand francs a year in three per cents," said Goupil "in one bond, I described it myself."

"Then consult the inventory," said the justice.

Goupil took a portfolio, searched it, drew out the memorandum, examined it, found what he wanted and read: "'*Item*, one bond—' Here, read it!—under number 23,533, letter M."

"Be so kind as to give me a copy of this item of the inventory between this and one o'clock; I will wait for it."

"Of what use can it be to you?" asked Goupil.

"Do you want to be notary?" replied the justice of the peace, looking severely at Dionis's appointed successor.

"I should think so!" cried Goupil, "I have swallowed enough humiliation to arrive at being called master. I entreat you to believe, Monsieur le Juge de Paix, that the wretched head clerk called Goupil has nothing in common with master Jean-Sébastien-Marie Goupil, notary of Nemours, husband of Mademoiselle Massin. These two beings are strangers, they are not even alike! Do you not notice anything about me?"

Monsieur Bongrand then looked at Goupil's costume and saw that he wore a white tie, a dazzling white shirt ornamented with ruby buttons, a red velvet waistcoat, trousers and coat of handsome black cloth made in Paris. He had smart boots. His hair, carefully smoothed and combed, smelt agreeable. In fact, he seemed transformed.

"The fact is, you are another man," said Bongrand.

"In morals as well as physique, monsieur! Wisdom comes with *practice;* and, moreover, fortune is the source of cleanliness—"

"In morals as well as physique," said the justice, settling his spectacles.

"Eh! monsieur, is a man with a hundred thousand crowns ever a democrat? So you may take me for an honest man that knows what delicacy is, and is disposed to love his wife," he added as he saw

Madame Goupil coming in. "So changed am I," he said, "that I find a great deal of intelligence in my Cousin Crémière, I am training her; and so her daughter never talks any more about pistons. In fact, yesterday you see, she said that Monsieur Savinien's dog was splendid *aux arrêts*—in confinement—: well then, I did not repeat this joke, however good it might be, and I immediately explained to her the difference between *etre à l'arrêt*—setting, of a dog—; *en arrêt*—couched as a lance—, and *aux arrêts*—in confinement—. And so, as you see, I am quite another man, and I would prevent any client from doing a dirty trick."

"Then make haste," said Bongrand. "See that I have that in an hour's time, and the notary Goupil will have made up for some of the misdeeds of the head clerk."

After having asked the Nemours doctor to lend him his horse and gig, the justice of the peace went to fetch the two accusing volumes, Ursule's bond, and, armed with the extract from the inventory, he hastened to Fontainebleau to see the public prosecutor. Bongrand readily proved the purloining of the three bonds by some one of the heirs, and, subsequently, the guilt of Minoret.

"His behavior is explained," said the public prosecutor.

As a measure of precaution, the magistrate forthwith wrote a stay for the treasury to the transfer of the three bonds, and instructed the justice of the peace to go and inquire into the proportion

of the income from the three bonds and to find out whether they had been sold. While the justice of the peace was at work in Paris, the public prosecutor wrote politely to Madame Minoret, asking her to call at his office. Zélie, full of anxiety about her son's duel, dressed, ordered the horses to be put to the carriage and came *in fiocchi* to Fontainebleau. The prosecutor's plan was simple and formidable. By separating the wife from the husband, he intended, through the terror inspired by justice, to learn the truth. Zélie found the magistrate in his study, and was completely crushed by these unceremonious words.

"Madame, I do not believe you to be an accomplice in a theft that has been made in the Minoret inheritance, and which justice is tracking at this present moment; but you can save your husband from the Assize Court by the entire confession of what you know about it. Moreover, the punishment your husband will incur is not the only thing to be feared; your son's removal and ruin have to be avoided. In a few minutes, it will be too late, the police are in the saddle and the commitment will start for Nemours."

Zélie nearly fainted. When she had regained her senses, she confessed all. After having easily shown this woman that she was an accomplice, the magistrate told her, that in order to save her husband and her son, he would proceed with caution.

"You have had to do with the man and not with the magistrate," he said. "There has been no

complaint made by the victim, or publicity given to the robbery; but your husband has committed horrible crimes, madame, that come under the jurisdiction of a far stricter tribunal than I am. In the present state of affairs, you must be made a prisoner —Oh! at my house, and on parole," he said, seeing Zélie about to relapse into a fainting fit. "You must remember that my strict duty would be to order a commitment and to commence proceedings; but I am now acting as Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët's guardian and of course her interests demand some compromise."

"Ah!" said Zélie.

"Write these words to your husband:"

And he dictated the following letter to Zélie, whom he placed at his desk:

"MI FREND,

"*i am arested, and i hav told al. Giv up thee hinskripshuns that owr unkel left to Monsieur de Portenduère in persewanse ov the wil that yu bernt, for Monsieur le praucureure du roa has just put inn an hopoxishun too thee Trexhury.*"

"In this way you will spare him the denials that would be his ruin," said the magistrate, smiling at the orthography, "we shall have the restitution managed decently. My wife will make your stay at my house as little unpleasant as possible, and I advise you not to say a word about it and not to appear at all agitated."

RESTITUTION.

"Mademoiselle," he said to her, "I have done you great wrong; but, if all the injury I have done cannot be completely amended, I can atone for some of it. My wife and I, we have made a vow to give you our entire estate of Le Rouvre in the event of our son's recovery, even as we shall if we have the fearful misfortune of losing him."

Copyrighted 1897 by G. B. F. Son

His deputy's mother once confessed and shut up, the magistrate sent for Désiré, related to him in detail the theft secretly committed by his father to Ursule's harm, and obviously to the injury of his co-heirs, and showed him the letter written by Zélie. Désiré was the first to ask permission to go to Nemours to see that his father made restitution.

"It is all very serious," said the magistrate. "The will having been destroyed, if the matter is spread about, the Massin and Crémière heirs, your relations, may interfere. I now have enough proofs against your father. I restore you your mother, who has been sufficiently enlightened as to her duties by this little ceremony. Before her, I shall appear to have yielded to your entreaties in setting her free. Go to Nemours with her, and bring all these difficulties to a good end. Do not be afraid of anybody. Monsieur Bongrand is too fond of Mademoiselle Mirouët ever to be guilty of any indiscretion."

Zélie and Désiré started immediately afterward for Nemours. Three hours after the departure of his deputy, an express messenger brought the public prosecutor the following letter, the orthography of which has been corrected, so as to spare any derision of a man overtaken by misfortune:

TO MONSIEUR LE PROCUREUR DU ROI, AT THE COURT OF FONTAINEBLEAU.

"MONSIEUR,

"God has not been so lenient with us as you were, and we are afflicted by an irreparable misfortune. Upon arriving at

the Nemours bridge, one of the traces became unhooked. My wife had no servant behind the carriage; the horses could smell their stable; my son, fearing their impatience, would not allow the coachman to get down, and jumped out to fasten the trace. Just as he was turning round to get up beside his mother, the horses started off, Désiré was not in time to squeeze himself against the parapet, the steps cut his legs, he fell and the back wheel went over his body. The express which is hastening to Paris to fetch the leading surgeons will take you this letter, which my son, in the midst of his agony, has told me to write to you, in order to inform you of our entire submission to your decision in the business that was bringing him home. Until my last breath, I shall be grateful to you for the way in which you have proceeded, and I will justify your confidence."

"FRANÇOIS MINORET."

The town of Nemours was distracted at this terrible event. The sympathetic crowd, at the gate of the Minorets' house, told Savinien that his revenge had been taken in hand by one more powerful than himself. The nobleman went at once to Ursule's, where the curé, as well as the young girl, were in greater terror than surprise. The next day, after the first dressing, when the doctors and surgeons from Paris had given their unanimous opinion upon the necessity of amputating both legs, Minoret came, dejected, pale, undone, accompanied by the curé, to Ursule's house, where were Bongrand and Savinien.

"Mademoiselle," he said to her, "I have done you great wrong; but, if all the injury I have done cannot be completely amended, I can atone for some of it. My wife and I, we have made a vow to give you our entire estate of Le Rouvre in the event of

our son's recovery, even as we shall if we have the fearful misfortune of losing him."

And the man burst into tears at the end of this sentence.

"I can assure you, my dear Ursule," said the curé, "that you can and ought to accept part of this gift."

"Will you forgive us?" said the colossus humbly, going down upon his knee before the astonished girl. "In a few hours, the operation is to be performed by the head surgeon of the Hôtel-Dieu; but I do not trust human science at all, I believe in God's omnipotence! If you forgive me, if you will go and ask God to spare us our son, he will have the strength to bear this torture, and I am certain that we shall have the happiness of saving him."

"Let us go to church!" said Ursule, rising.

Once risen, she gave a piercing shriek, fell back upon the sofa and fainted. When she regained consciousness she saw her friends, save Minoret who had rushed out to fetch a doctor, all anxiously watching her, waiting for her to speak. Her words struck a chill in every heart.

"I saw my godfather at the door," she said, "and he signed to me that there was no hope."

In fact, the day after the operation, Désiré died, carried off by fever and the revulsion of the humors which follows upon these operations. Madame Minoret, who had no other feeling in her heart than that of maternity, went mad after her son's burial and was put by her husband under the care of Doctor Blanche, where she died in 1841.

Three months after these events, in January, 1837, Ursule was married to Savinien, with the consent of Madame de Portenduère. Minoret became a party to the marriage settlements so as to give Mademoiselle Mirouët his estate of Le Rouvre and twenty-four thousand francs a year in the Funds, keeping nothing of his fortune except his uncle's house and six thousand francs a year. He has become the most charitable, the most pious man in Nemours; he is churchwarden of the parish and has constituted himself the providence of all unfortunates.

"The poor have taken my son's place," he said.

If you have ever remarked beside the way, in countries where oaks are lopped off, some old tree, blanched and almost withered, still pushing forth shoots, with gaping sides, calling for the axe, you will have some idea of the thin, white-haired, broken down old postmaster, in whom the veterans of the country do not recognize the happy imbecile whom we saw waiting for his son at the beginning of this story; he no longer takes his snuff in the same manner, he carries something besides his body. In short, one feels in every way that God's hand has been laid heavily upon this figure to make a terrible example of him. After having so hated his uncle's ward, this old man, like Doctor Minoret, has so thoroughly centred his affections in Ursule, that he has constituted himself manager of her estates in Nemours.

Monsieur and Madame de Portenduère spend five

months of the year in Paris, where they have bought a magnificent mansion in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. After giving her house in Nemours to the Sisters of Mercy to keep a free school, the dowager Madame de Portenduère went to live at Le Rouvre, where La Bougival is head concierge. Cabirolle's father, the old conductor of La Ducler, a man of sixty, has married La Bougival, who possesses twelve hundred francs a year, besides the ample salary from her situation. Cabirolle's son is Monsieur de Portenduère's coachman.

If you should see passing through the Champs-Elysées one of those charming little low carriages called *escargots*, lined with silk gridelin, ornamented with blue trimmings, and should admire a pretty, fair woman therein, her face wreathed in myriads of curls, with eyes like shining periwinkles and brimful of love, leaning lightly against a handsome young man; if you should be bitten with envious longing, just think that this handsome Heaven-blest couple have early had their share in the miseries of life. These two married lovers will probably be the Vicomte de Portenduère and his wife. There are not two such couples in Paris.

"Theirs is the greatest happiness I have ever seen," was said of them lately by the Comtesse de l'Estorade.

So bless these happy children instead of envying them, and look for another Ursule Mirouët, a young girl brought up by three old men, and the best of mothers—adversity.

Goupil, who is useful to everybody and is justly regarded as the wittiest man in Nemours, enjoys the esteem of all in the little town; but he is punished through his children, who are ugly, stunted and inclined to hydrocephalus. Dionis, his predecessor, flourishes in the Chamber of Deputies, of which he is one of the brightest ornaments, to the great satisfaction of the king, who sees Madame Dionis at all his balls. Madame Dionis gives the whole town of Nemours the details of her receptions at the Tuileries and of the grandeur of the French King's court; she reigns in Nemours, by means of the throne, which certainly became popular at that time.

Bongrand is president of the Court at Melun: his son is in a fair way to become a very creditable attorney-general.

Madame Crémière always says the funniest things in the world. She adds a *g* to tambour*g*, apparently because her pen sputters. On the eve of her daughter's marriage, she told her at the conclusion of her instructions that a wife should be *the busy caterpillar* in her house, and should keep a *sphinx's* eye upon everything. Goupil is also making a collection of his cousin's nonsense, a *Crémièrana*.

"We have had the sorrow of losing our good Abbé Chaperon," said Madame la Vicomtesse de Portenduère this winter, she having tended him during his illness. "The whole district came to his funeral. Nemours is fortunate, for this holy man's successor is the venerable Curé de Saint-Lange."

Paris, June-July, 1841.

LIST OF ETCHINGS

VOLUME XXIII

	PAGE
THE DILIGENCE TO NEMOURS	*Fronts.*
NEMOURS, RUE DES BOURGEOIS	100
SAVINIEN'S LETTER	208
RESTITUTION	344